

TIKES 20 AUGUST 1996

Aaronovitch on
and Wasps Page 2

£2.38m
boost for
English
cricket

England's international
yesterday received a £2.38m
boost. A scheme designed
to produce continuity for
the team was announced
at Lord's by the Cricket
Board, and the deal should
see the team in action
each of the next four home
tests.

It is an important finding
in the structure of the English
Cricket Board, which now
and running on David Gower's
Oscie Wheeler, the chair
of the Test and International
Committee.

A major new role for
Gower is to oversee the
established products of the
centres involved in those
graduates from the highly
successful Australian Academy.

A wide range of 42
schools from the best and
brightest Board players, char-
acterised by the fact that
they have been selected as
development projects which
will last 22 years.

The first cohort of
students for the first year
of Under-17, Under-19
and Under-21 groups
at the Royal Holloway
University, which has just
begun its first year.

What follows is the
procession of the young men
in England and Wales,
under-17, under-19 and
under-21 groups in
countries such as Scotland,
Wales, Northern Ireland,
England and the
Republic of Ireland.

After the first year
of Under-17, Under-19
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EXCLUSIVE
GATEWAY TO
the college
Vocational

In tomorrow's paper

Sooty in
sex scandal



THE INDEPENDENT

3,070

WEDNESDAY 21 AUGUST 1996

WEATHER: Cloudy with showers

40P (44SP)

Pupils dumped in exam race

FRAN ABRAMS
Education Correspondent

Thousands of pupils have been withdrawn from GCSE exams this year, amid fears that schools are holding back weak candidates to boost their league table scores. This new-style selection is expected to have helped raise the GCSE pass rate, due to be announced today, by more than one percentage point, *The Independent* has learned.

Almost 54 per cent of exam entries are expected to be graded 'A' or above this year, but it seems that up to 50,000 pupils have never been entered at all - at least 11,500 more than last

year. Added to those who failed, never completed the coursework or did not turn up for the exams, the figures show that more than 90,000 pupils - more than one in seven - left school without qualifications this summer.

The revelation will raise new questions about Britain's ability to compete with other industrialised nations, such as Germany and Japan, where most pupils stay on at school longer and leave better qualified.

Last night opposition politicians angrily condemned the

trend as proof that increased competition in the education system was leaving many youngsters on the scrap-heap.

Don Foster, the Liberal Democrats' education spokesman, said weaker candidates were being kept out of the exam room.

"Too many young people's futures are being sacrificed on the altar of Tory league tables and market forces in education. Fear of these tables is leaving less able pupils in a class of their own - as far away from the exam halls as possible," he said.

There are almost 18,000 extra

leavers this year, he said.

Figures compiled by the Labour Party show that in re-

this year because of a rise in the birth rate, taking the total to almost 600,000. Despite the 3 per cent rise in pupil numbers, the number of exam entries has gone up by just 1 per cent or about 6,500 candidates.

Figures compiled by the Labour Party show that in re-

cent years, one pupil in eight has left school without qualifications. The disappearance of about 1,500 pupils from the system this year suggests that that proportion is likely to rise dramatically.

David Blunkett, Labour's education spokesman, said he

was determined to see all pupils reaching at least GCSE level by the age of 18.

"Without essential qualifications, these young people will find it increasingly difficult to find lasting work or to move on to further qualifications later in life," he said.

League tables, introduced nationally in 1993, show the proportion of pupils gaining five or more A-C grades at GCSE rising annually, and now standing at 43.5 per cent.

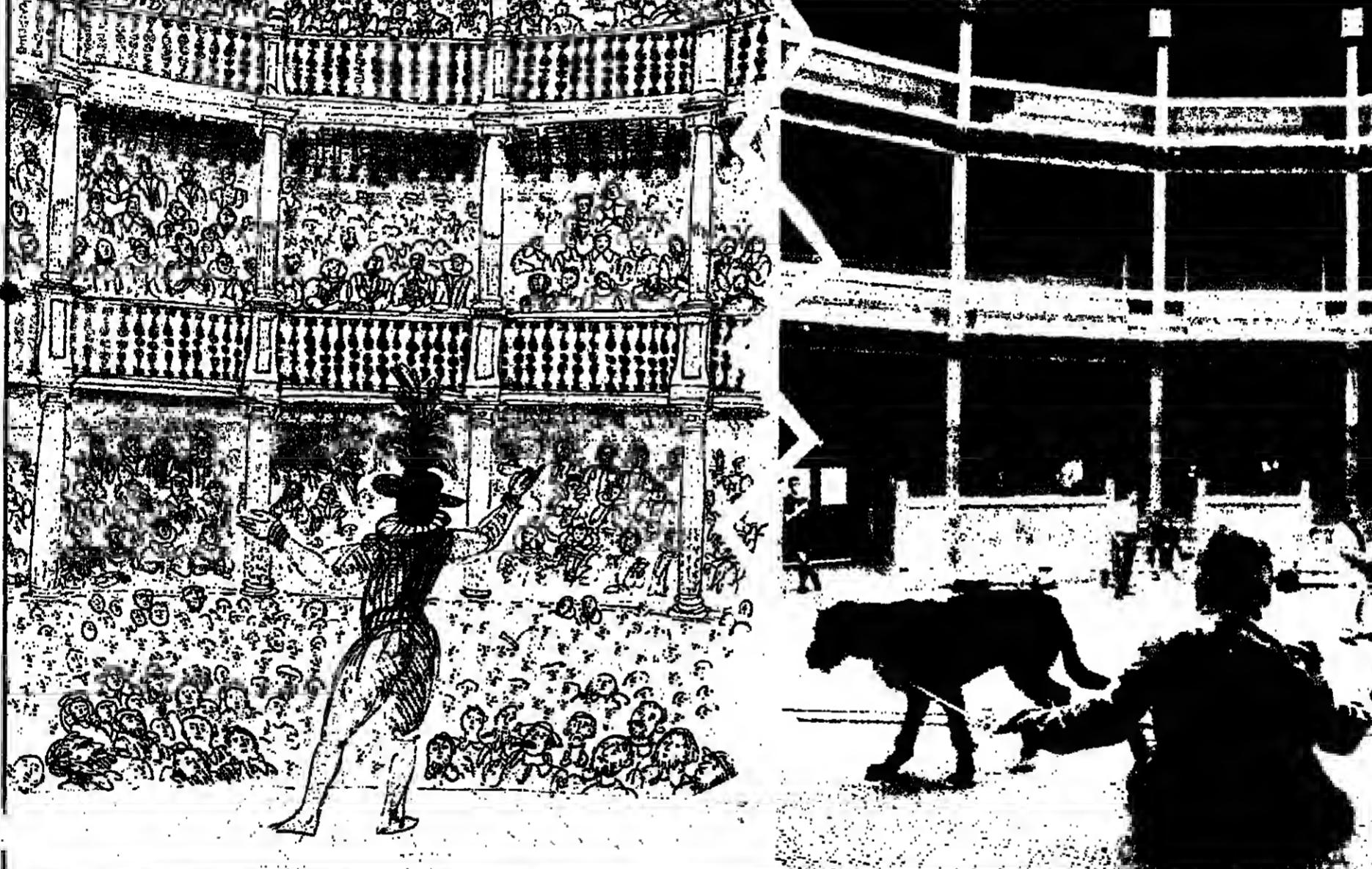
But they tend to ignore the long tail of underachievement which many commentators feel

the less likely pupils don't get as much," he said.

Sir John claimed that, in inner-city areas, many schools had such poor intakes that they were really secondary moderns rather than comprehensives. In those same areas, many parents were not fully committed to education.

There are other possible explanations for the drop in exam entries, but none adequately explains the scale of the phenomenon. About 100 schools out of 4,000 have taken vocational qualifications for the first time this summer, and others may have decided to reduce the GCSEs taken by each pupil.

GCSE: RUP, page 12



Resurrection: The Globe as it was in Shakespeare's day (left); and (right) 300 years on, as actors prepare for its opening night. Watercolour: David Gentleman/Photograph: Philip Meech

Kremlin at war over Chechen conflict

PHIL REEVES
Moscow

Top Russian officials were yesterday fighting over who is in charge of resolving the Chechen war while President Boris Yeltsin - long rumoured to be ill - took off for a break in the country. His weakness at such a crucial moment has created a dangerous power vacuum at the heart of the Kremlin.

While confusion and intrigue

swept through Moscow, the

clock ticked towards tomorrow's deadline, when the Russian acting commander in the war zone says he will start bombing Grozny in order to wrest back control of the city.

Aides to President Yeltsin have dismissed media reports that Mr Yeltsin has had another bout of cardiac trouble, after his two heart attacks last year. They have dismissed a *Time* magazine article which said the Kremlin is considering sending him to a Swiss clinic for double bypass surgery. And

they have denied a report yesterday by Moscow's Echo Moskvy radio station, which alleged he had been in a special cardiological centre for the last five days.

But if he is not ill - and the signs are that he is - his decision to set off on holiday in the Russian north-west is baffling. He left behind a furious dispute between Alexander Lebed, head of the Security Council, who is expected to go to Chechnya today, and hardliners within the government who cling to the belief that the conflict can be settled by force. He also left behind an unfolding tragedy in Grozny, where tens of thousands of refugees were fleeing the city, terrified by the prospect of a fresh Russian onslaught.

The crisis has sprung up only a fortnight after Mr Yeltsin's inauguration and bodies ill for his new government. Beneath the detail of the disputes between his entourage lies a struggle for power caused by the knowledge that the ailing President may not be well enough to complete his

term. Mr Lebed has made no secret of his presidential ambitions.

Yesterday, in another outburst, Mr Lebed issued a statement via the Security Council that, in effect, suggested Lebed's council was trying to scupper his recent peace efforts by issuing instructions on the President's behalf, without consulting him. The orders were that he, as presidential envoy to the war zone, should ensure that the Chechen separatists holding Grozny withdraw from their

positions before the Russians entered further talks. The Security Council's statement warned of heavy losses among Russian troops and 'massive' civilian casualties.

As Mr Lebed has taken a conciliatory approach to Chechnya, the policy appeared to be a victory for the government's hawks. It came only two days after he publicly demanded the sacking of the interior minister, Anatoly Kulikov, for mishandling the war.

Chechen crisis, page 8

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news

Potted history of a love for tea

Everything stops for tea – even time itself, apparently.

The Robert Adam-designed state rooms of Syon House, the London home of the Duke of Northumberland, have become the venue for a celebration of Georgian and Regency Britain's passion for the cup that cheers without intoxicating.

In a scene to stir a tea-lover's heart the exhibition, which opens today, features a table set for two as it would have been in the late 18th Century, with costumed maenaequins on hand to "take tea".

Silver, china, documents and tea-drinking memorabilia from the Northumberland family archives are in the exhibition, as are a group of seven historic tea pots from the Norwich Castle Museum collection.

There is also material from the archives of Twinings, the 290-year-old tea blending company.

The exhibition is being held in association with Twinings.



Cup of joy: The hands of Sam Twinning, of the 290-year-old tea blenders Twinings, holding one of the exhibition's cups

Photograph: Jane Baker

The stifling of democracy: Prime Minister allows Parliament to be by-passed, says Straw

EU laws 'blocked by arrogance'

ANTHONY BEVINS and JOHN LICHFIELD

The Tory claim to be the only party that can be trusted to defend the constitution has been blown apart by ministers' "high-handed and arrogant" treatment of European Union legislation, shadow Home Secretary Jack Straw said yesterday.

Commenting on yesterday's explosive report, in *The Independent*, of the way in which Whitehall and Brussels had hindered and over-ridden the democratic checks of Westminster, Mr Straw blamed John Major and his ministers.

"The scrutiny of legislation ought to be one of Parliament's most important functions," he said.

"But the Prime Minister and

his colleagues are allowing Parliament to be by-passed. This gives the lie to the claim that they are 'holding for Britain' in Europe.

It also blows apart Mr Major's claim that he is the only one that can be trusted with the constitution."

Mr Straw said the Prime Minister had made a June speech, in which he had boasted about the "new procedure" that had been introduced for the scrutiny of European legislation.

The Labour frontbencher said there had been no mention in the Major speech of how the Commons European Legislation Committee was being asked to examine directives and regulations without official texts; of how it was being forced to wait up to 14 months for



Jack Straw: Major 'ignorant'

replies to requests for information from Whitehall; of how ministers were over-riding Westminster blocks on legislation; and how Whitehall departments were repeatedly sending material to wrong ad-

resses – or even non-existent select committees.

"Mr Major shows stunning ignorance of his own Government's practice on European legislation," Mr Straw said.

"His Government is showing a high-handed and arrogant approach to this matter, with little regard for Parliament's proper role as a check on the executive."

As for Whitehall's "lack-advised" attitude towards the select committee, Mr Straw said: "The administrative machinery of Whitehall is one of the most efficient in Europe."

The British civil service is capable of Rolls Royce administration, and if things are going wrong in this way, one can only assume that officials are taking their lead from ministers. The

ministers are setting the tone for behaviour of their departments."

Mr Straw said that Jimmy Hood, the Labour chairman of the European Legislation Committee, and his all-party colleagues, were working very hard, but their efforts were being thwarted by Brussels and Whitehall. "This is not the fault of the Commons: the Government has all the power; the procedure is dominated by ministers."

The European Commission denied there was any systematic problem with the publication of legislative proposals in English. EU officials said that in most cases the official English texts were available within a few days of proposals being adopted by the Commission. The texts were then provided to member

governments, the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament. It was the job of member governments to pass the documents on to their institutions.

Foreign Office sources also said that the great majority of EU documents were reaching the committee promptly. The sources said that there had been delays in some cases (often when there was a legal-linguistic dispute about the text).

As a result, the Government was pushing for a minimum period for publication.

Meanwhile, the committee will retake when the Commons returns from its summer break on 14 October – by refusing to approve any legislation that is delivered without an official text – in English.

SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

Industrial unrest spread to more train operating companies and now affects up to 18,000 employees throughout most of the old British Rail network. Meanwhile, at London Underground, some 1,800 drivers belonging to the Aslef union are today expected to accept a peace formula to end a campaign of 24-hour stoppages which has brought travel chaos to the capital. Their 900 colleagues in the RMT transport union, however, are predicted to reject the deal and may press ahead with a scheduled stoppage on Friday. *Barrie Clement*

Mandy Allwood, the 31-year-old woman who is expecting octuplets, will continue to be treated by Professor Kyprios Nicolaides, a leading specialist in multiple births and foetal reduction, it emerged last night. Soilhill Health Authority, which is responsible for her care, has reversed its decision not to pay for Ms Allwood's specialist treatment in London, in the interests of her health and that of her babies. The health authority had argued that equivalent care, at less cost, was available in Birmingham for Ms Allwood, who has signed a six-figure deal with the *News of the World* for her story. *Liz Hunt*

The Government will unveil new pollution standards today amid concern over the growing impact of poor air standards on the nation's health. The Liberal Democrats claimed yesterday that the current "crisis" in the number of asthma sufferers was partly caused by air pollution and lack of concerted Government action.

Their claims came after a weekend of the worst smog levels in the country this year. *Michael Streeter*

A loyalist parade has been banned by police from going through the Catholic Lower Ormeau district of south Belfast on Sunday. The area has in recent years become a flashpoint for marches, with local nationalist residents objecting to loyalists marching through the district.

The march, organised by the Royal Black Preceptory, is one of the last of the marching season. Several other Royal Black Preceptory parades are planned for this weekend, including one in the south Londonderry village of Bellaghy where marchers and protesters were involved in a 19-hour standoff at an Apprentice Boys church parade eight days ago. *David McKittrick*

DNA samples taken from five teenage boys on the same French school trip as murdered teenager Caroline Dickinson proved negative, police said yesterday. Caroline was raped and murdered during a school trip to the town of Pleine-Poussière, Brittany, on 18 July. The DNA tests from the boys were taken after five French detectives arrived in Launceston, Cornwall, to continue the inquiry with the help of 20 Devon and Cornwall officers.

The parents of missing youngsters Jodi and Tim Loughlin may face a lifetime of uncertainty over their children's fate. Attempts to find Jodi, six, and her four-year-old brother, who went missing from Holme beach near Hunstanton, Norfolk, on Sunday, had proved fruitless last night. Police were increasingly afraid that the children were swept out to sea after excitedly running into the sea at the start of their holiday. Local tidal experts said there was a good chance that the bodies might never be found.

A law firm is to fight for compensation for people who claim serious side-effects from the anti-malarial drug Lariam. Bristol-based Lawrence Tuckett said it had been awarded an exclusive legal aid contract to pursue a claim against Swiss pharmaceutical giants Hoffman-La Roche. It had been contacted by around 900 prospective litigants.

THE INDEPENDENT ABROAD

		OVERSEAS SUBSCRIPTIONS
Austria	£24.00	Ireland £6.00
Belgium	£19.00	Italy £4.50
Canada	£65.00	Malta £12.00
Cyprus	£23.20	Mexico £194.00
Denmark	£16.00	Portugal £20.00
Iraq	£14.50	Spain £14.00
Spain	£20.00	Sweden £12.00
Switzerland	£24.00	UK £110.76
Thailand	£12.00	USA, Zone 1 £14.00
UK	£12.00	USA, Zone 2 £14.50
USA, Zone 1	£12.00	USA, Zone 3 £15.00
USA, Zone 2	£12.50	USA, Zone 4 £15.50
USA, Zone 3	£13.00	USA, Zone 5 £16.00
USA, Zone 4	£13.50	USA, Zone 6 £16.50
USA, Zone 5	£14.00	USA, Zone 7 £17.00
USA, Zone 6	£14.50	USA, Zone 8 £17.50
USA, Zone 7	£15.00	USA, Zone 9 £18.00
USA, Zone 8	£15.50	USA, Zone 10 £18.50
USA, Zone 9	£16.00	USA, Zone 11 £19.00
USA, Zone 10	£16.50	USA, Zone 12 £19.50
USA, Zone 11	£17.00	USA, Zone 13 £20.00
USA, Zone 12	£17.50	USA, Zone 14 £20.50
USA, Zone 13	£18.00	USA, Zone 15 £21.00
USA, Zone 14	£18.50	USA, Zone 16 £21.50
USA, Zone 15	£19.00	USA, Zone 17 £22.00
USA, Zone 16	£19.50	USA, Zone 18 £22.50
USA, Zone 17	£20.00	USA, Zone 19 £23.00
USA, Zone 18	£20.50	USA, Zone 20 £23.50
USA, Zone 19	£21.00	USA, Zone 21 £24.00
USA, Zone 20	£21.50	USA, Zone 22 £24.50
USA, Zone 21	£22.00	USA, Zone 23 £25.00
USA, Zone 22	£22.50	USA, Zone 24 £25.50
USA, Zone 23	£23.00	USA, Zone 25 £26.00
USA, Zone 24	£23.50	USA, Zone 26 £26.50
USA, Zone 25	£24.00	USA, Zone 27 £27.00
USA, Zone 26	£24.50	USA, Zone 28 £27.50
USA, Zone 27	£25.00	USA, Zone 29 £28.00
USA, Zone 28	£25.50	USA, Zone 30 £28.50
USA, Zone 29	£26.00	USA, Zone 31 £29.00
USA, Zone 30	£26.50	USA, Zone 32 £29.50
USA, Zone 31	£27.00	USA, Zone 33 £30.00
USA, Zone 32	£27.50	USA, Zone 34 £30.50
USA, Zone 33	£28.00	USA, Zone 35 £31.00
USA, Zone 34	£28.50	USA, Zone 36 £31.50
USA, Zone 35	£29.00	USA, Zone 37 £32.00
USA, Zone 36	£29.50	USA, Zone 38 £32.50
USA, Zone 37	£30.00	USA, Zone 39 £33.00
USA, Zone 38	£30.50	USA, Zone 40 £33.50
USA, Zone 39	£31.00	USA, Zone 41 £34.00
USA, Zone 40	£31.50	USA, Zone 42 £34.50
USA, Zone 41	£32.00	USA, Zone 43 £35.00
USA, Zone 42	£32.50	USA, Zone 44 £35.50
USA, Zone 43	£33.00	USA, Zone 45 £36.00
USA, Zone 44	£33.50	USA, Zone 46 £36.50
USA, Zone 45	£34.00	USA, Zone 47 £37.00
USA, Zone 46	£34.50	USA, Zone 48 £37.50
USA, Zone 47	£35.00	USA, Zone 49 £38.00
USA, Zone 48	£35.50	USA, Zone 50 £38.50
USA, Zone 49	£36.00	USA, Zone 51 £39.00
USA, Zone 50	£36.50	USA, Zone 52 £39.50
USA, Zone 51	£37.00	USA, Zone 53 £40.00
USA, Zone 52	£37.50	USA, Zone 54 £40.50
USA, Zone 53	£38.00	USA, Zone 55 £41.00
USA, Zone 54	£38.50	USA, Zone 56 £41.50
USA, Zone 55	£39.00	USA, Zone 57 £42.00
USA, Zone 56	£39.50	USA, Zone 58 £42.50
USA, Zone 57	£40.00	USA, Zone 59 £43.00
USA, Zone 58	£40.50	USA, Zone 60 £43.50
USA, Zone 59	£41.00	USA, Zone 61 £44.00
USA, Zone 60	£41.50	USA, Zone 62 £44.50
USA, Zone 61	£42.00	USA, Zone 63 £45.00
USA, Zone 62	£42.50	USA, Zone 64 £45.50
USA, Zone 63	£43.00	USA, Zone 65 £46.00
USA, Zone 64	£43.50	USA, Zone 66 £46.50
USA, Zone 65	£44.00	USA, Zone 67 £47.00
USA, Zone 66	£44.50	USA, Zone 68 £47.50
USA, Zone 67	£45.00	USA, Zone 69 £48.00
USA, Zone 68	£45.50	USA, Zone 70 £48.50
USA, Zone 69	£46.00	USA, Zone 71 £49.00
USA, Zone 70	£46.50	USA, Zone 72 £49.50
USA, Zone 71	£47.00	USA, Zone 73 £50.00
USA, Zone 72	£47.50	USA, Zone 74 £50.50
USA, Zone 73	£48.00	USA, Zone 75 £51.00
USA, Zone 74	£48.50	USA, Zone 76 £51.50
USA, Zone 75	£49.00	USA, Zone 77 £52.00
USA, Zone 76	£49.50	USA, Zone 78 £52.50
USA, Zone 77	£50.00	USA, Zone 79 £53.00
USA, Zone 78	£50.50	USA, Zone 80 £53.50
USA, Zone 79	£51.00	USA, Zone 81 £54.00
USA, Zone 80	£51.50	USA, Zone 82 £54.50
USA, Zone 81	£52.00	USA, Zone 83 £55.00
USA, Zone 82	£52.50	USA, Zone 84 £55.50
USA, Zone 83	£53.00	USA, Zone 85 £56.00
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Toddlers left in Belfast drinking den

Children found in 'unbelievable' squalor

DAVID McKITTRICK
Ireland Correspondent

An inquiry has been launched into a case in which four children, all aged four years or younger, were found unattended in a filthy house used as a drinking den in north Belfast.

Conditions in the house shocked social workers and police, who had to mask their faces against the smell of urine and faeces. Neighbours told of seeing a four-year-old boy clambering out of a window to eat bread left for birds. He was also seen scavenging through discarded take-away food cartons.

The four children – three boys aged four, three, and 10 months, and their two-year-old sister – were taken into care earlier on Saturday morning. Police who went the house found four

drunken youths, who were unrelated to the family.

Beer cans were scattered throughout the house and the garden. A baby's cot was soaked in urine, while more urine was found in milk bottles. The smell was described as "unbelievable." After the children were taken into care, local people moved in to clean the house, taking away 10 bags of rubbish.

The North and West Belfast Health and Social Services Trust said the family was known to staff and that out-of-hours social work services had responded promptly.

Locals said social workers had visited the house at least twice. One woman said: "The welfare was to blame. They made regular visits but they just seemed to have overlooked the problem. This is what made us so angry. When you think of what those poor children had to suffer – it's awful."

A local Sinn Féin councillor, Bobby Lavery, has been to the house before, and it's going to happen again. It's not because the people working for welfare are bad people. There's not enough money being put in with Government cutbacks. Government cutbacks are causing this pain to the children."

Judy Kennedy, the health trust's programme manager of family and child-care, said the children were safe and well in care. She said neglect, unlike physical or sexual abuse, where there were obvious physical signs, was difficult to assess and could deteriorate very rapidly.

She added: "By law we are required in the first instance to really try and support parents, and to view admission to care as something which only happens when there is really no other option." She said the trust would be examining the case and its treatment very carefully.

Home alone: the rubbish-strewn exterior of the Ardoyne house, where a four-year-old was reduced to scavenging bird food

Women in revealing clothes have no redress, says lawyer

STEVE BOGGAN
and SHENAI RAIF

Women who wear revealing clothes in public have no right to complain if men subsequently sneak photographs or video pictures of them, a female barrister told a court yesterday.

Mr Archer was facing two unrelated charges of theft.

During legal argument over whether his tabloid "video rat" reputation would hamper his chances of a fair hearing, Ms Samuel said the trial should go ahead, adding: "It is not as if he climbed over the wall of Kensington Palace and stuck a video camera through her bedroom window."

After the hearing at Southwark Crown Court, London, the barrister said she was making a legal point, not expressing

head of security at Harvey Nichols who came to national attention in January when security cameras at the store were used to record a visit of the Princess of Wales, complete with linking shots of her legs and cleavage.

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After the hearing at Southwark Crown Court, London, the barrister said she was making a legal point, not expressing

ing a point of view. "The point was whether the defendant would have his reputation lowered in the view of a jury by taking a photograph of a woman in a low-cut dress," she said.

"If someone goes into a public place wearing a low-cut dress and someone takes a photograph or a video they can't complain later."

Last night, her comments came under fire from fellow women solicitors and politicians.

Labour's spokeswoman on women's affairs, Janet Anderson said: "This woman barrister may have been making a legal point, but I think she could have chosen her words more sensitively and carefully.

"To suggest Diana – or any woman – was inviting it because

of the way she was dressed is quite disgraceful."

Alison Parkinson, chairwoman of the Association of Women Solicitors, said: "I can see the point she was trying to make – because it is not an offence to film anyone in public – but it was unfortunate she used these words to make it."

The case against Mr Archer, of Bridgwater, Somerset, was thrown out by the judge, Recorder Desmond Brown, OC, because the time that had elapsed since the alleged thefts – of two walkie-talkies, two rags and a foustool – in 1993 had prevented him from tracing a vital witness.

However, he agreed with Ms Samuel that the "video rat" stories were out in themselves prejudicial.

Will the real Tony Blair please stand up?

JOJO MOYES

"I do have a similar smile, but perhaps he's too bland to have a double," said Michael Sweeney, head of doubles agency Lookalikes. "We have a few John Majors and at some dinner speeches people like to have a leader of the opposition to have a bit of a ruck. We've had a couple of those but we haven't been able to get a Tony Blair, which meant we had to use a Clinton," he said. "That obviously wasn't as satisfactory."

Michael Aidan-Ross is apparently one of a rare breed; the Tony Blair lookalike. Last night it emerged that Mr Blair's "bland" features have made it impossible to get an accurate likeness.

"We've been looking for a Tony Blair for eight months but we can't find anyone who looks like him. One paper called him 'bland Blair' so

that out, I think this devil's eyes thing might come along."

The difficulties in getting an accurate likeness of Mr Blair are not confined to lookalike agencies. Madame Tussauds, who recently produced a waxwork model of the opposition leader, said that his image had proved somewhat difficult.

"The problem for our sculptor was that at the sitting, which was where she met him, he was all smiles, and in most of the photographs he was all smiles," the spokeswoman said. "But when we discussed his pose with him we had a look around and saw the models of John Major and Paddy Ashdown, which looked... serious. So he decided he'd like to look quite serious, which she found very difficult." Mr Blair, it emerged, did not look recognisably like Mr Blair when straight-faced.

Becoming a convincing Mr Blair in the run up to an election may prove very lucrative, according to agencies. Guest appearances mean a "good" Tony Blair can earn £15,000-£20,000 in three months.

Mr Aidan-Ross is well aware of this. He watches political coverage and even joined the Labour Party to try and get his portrayal as accurate as possible. The key, he says, is in the mannerisms. "He looks directly at people, unlike other politicians," he said. "I've heard criticisms of his smile but apart from that I think he's actually pretty good looking. But I'm bound to say that, aren't I?"

And the real Tony Blair? He is the man in the middle (above).



A Blair lookalike, a waxwork, and the man himself – but which is which?

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news

Just how good do we really feel?

New mortgages highest since 1994 as credit fuels high street

NIC CICUTTI

It may not feel like the "feel-good factor" yet, but economists, housing analysts and retailers queued up yesterday to tell us that rising spending means that though still not in a state of ecstatic happiness, we are no longer feeling as grumpy as last year.

Mortgage-lending figures from the Building Societies Association showed that new lending commitments rose to £53,000 in July, the highest total since March 1994. Lending totalled £1.2bn, 7 per cent more than in the same period last year.

The BSA added that mortgages were being repaid more quickly, mainly because some borrowers had not changed their standing orders when interest rates fell.

Ron Armstrong, the BSA's deputy director general, said: "Other housing market indicators look promising. Transactions have been increasing since April and house prices have also been rising, encouraging more sellers on to the market."

Further evidence of an increase came from the Credit Card Research Group, which said that plastic-card spending in July was, at £6.9bn, some 16 per cent up on the same period last year. The use of cards in the High Street was up 19 per cent. Elizabeth Phillips, director of the group, said, however, that part of the increase came from the growing popularity of cards compared to money: "Consumers are realising that they can use their deb-

it cards in a wider variety of stores than only supermarkets and petrol stations."

John Lewis said sales at its 23 stores were 7.5 per cent up in the past six months compared to the same period last year.

Ruth Parkhouse, assistant director at the British Retail Consortium, the retail trade body, said: "Sales have increased by about 3 per cent. We have seen increases in almost every single retail area."

"This seems to be because customers' confidence is returning. The areas where sales are returning include things like carpets and furnishings, china and glassware, obviously related to the return of confidence in the housing market."

"Generally, you have to say that if someone is prepared to spend a couple of thousands of pounds on new furniture they must be reasonably satisfied that they are not going to lose their jobs."

Jonathan Loynes, UK economist at HSBC Greenwich, added: "It is down to a combination of factors, including mortgage interest rates down to their lowest level for more than 30 years, falling unemployment, down from 2.9 million to 2.1 million in the past four years, and the anticipated windfall from building society flotation."

"Probably the most important thing is the state of the housing market which has risen more than 5 per cent in the past 12 months. Negative equity is gradually becoming a thing of the past for many people."

Shares at record high, page 16



Comfortably off again: A bed put to the test in a London department store yesterday

Photograph: Tom Pilston

Call it a boom?
It's just juggling
with statistics,
say Labour

Alistair Darling, Labour's shadow Treasury secretary, yesterday dismissed suggestions that the long-awaited "feel-good factor" was finally returning and might boost the electoral fortunes of the Government, writes Nic Cicutti.

Mr Darling said that an average family was paying £2,000 more in tax than four years ago and dismissed as "nonsense" suggestions that better economic figures showed a new boom is on the way.

"We want to see our constituents feeling better," he said yesterday.

"Many of them deserve it, because they have had a raw deal for many, many years, but the fact is that most people don't actually feel better."

"They may feel they are out being clobbered day in day out quite as much as they have been over the last year or two, but they don't feel good and they don't trust the Tories to get them out of the problems this country has been in."

Despite falling unemployment and the lowest interest rates for more than 30 years, stimulating a minor housing market recovery, Mr Darling said: "I think the idea is somehow, because of one or two economic statistics, everything has turned round for the Tories is nonsense."

"People... are worried about what the Tories will do to the health service, they are worried about class sizes, the state of the schools; they are paying higher council taxes, water charges," he told BBC Radio 4's *Today*.

programme. He claimed that public borrowing was heading for a £1.2bn shortfall this year, despite recent optimistic figures. The national debt had doubled since 1990, Mr Darling added.

Jonathan Loynes, UK economist at HSBC Greenwich, said: "Our own view is that we are returning to a position where consumers are in the forefront of recovery."

"But it could be argued that there are still a number of problems. The first point is the question of debt. People are now already in much more debt this time round than they were at the last stage of the recovery.

In 1985, consumer debt was 80 per cent of average income, reaching 115 per cent in 1991. Today, that stands at 106 per cent. People are not going to feel that good if they owe so much."

Mr Loynes said changes in the labour market mean that while labour is much more flexible, that may not be such a good thing for the man in the street. The job for life is no longer guaranteed, while wages are now scarcely rising above inflation.

"Part of the problem may be a question of psychology. After the boom-and-bust experience of the last decade, it is quite possible that no longer believe in that sort of thing."

Mr Loynes cited a recent survey indicating that, despite several years of falling unemployment, a recent poll showed more people expected it to rise this year than the other way round.

New working peers: List spans glamorous names from business and public relations to loyal party workers and voices from ethnic minorities

Saatchi and Rogers are plum signings for upper chamber

CHRIS BLACKHURST

Lifelong party workers, glamorous names from business, women, and prominent figures from ethnic minorities form the main themes behind the new working peers' list, chosen personally by the three main party leaders.

Alongside the likes of dames Joyce Anelay and Hazel Byford, tireless Tory servants, come the superstars of the advertising and architecture worlds, Maurice

Saatchi and Sir Richard Rogers. While Mr Saatchi's devotion to the Tory cause is well-known - as is that of his fellow media guru, Peter Gummer, also made a working lord - Sir Richard's allegiance to Labour has been more private. Undoubtedly a plum signing for New Labour, Sir Richard's growing prominence as a design and style icon, will bring a flash of brilliance to the Upper Chamber.

The Tories' counterblast is to produce an equally major fig-

ure from retailing, Sir Ian MacLaurin, the guiding light behind Tesco's storming of the high street these past few years. Just as Sir Richard is credited with transforming many of the world's city centres, Sir Ian has spearheaded Tesco's introduction of glitzier, upmarket lines and new products.

The contrast between Labour's choice of women peers and that of Tories could not be greater. While the two dames, Anelay and Byford,

have remained close to the grass roots, the two new Labour baronesses, Mette Ramsay and Elizabeth Symons, have carved out high-profile careers in a still male-dominated world. Ms Ramsay rose to the top of the Foreign Office before resigning to advise John Smith, the late Labour leader; Ms Symons was the first woman to be appointed general secretary of a front-line trade union - the First Division Association of senior civil servants. A redoubtable

performer before Commons select committees and in negotiations with permanent secretaries, Ms Symons has established the FDA as a major influence on Whitehall policy and reforms.

In what could be seen as a sop to old Labour, one of its stalwarts, Larry Whitty, is ennobled by Tony Blair. The former general secretary of the party under Neil Kinnock and John Smith, he was responsible for guiding through many of their

reforms before being effectively frozen out two years ago.

John Taylor, the black Tory candidate vilified by racists in the general election campaign at Cheltenham in 1992 gets his reward of a peerage from Mr Major. Since being defeated in Cheltenham, Mr Taylor, a barrister, has built a new career as a radio and television presenter.

He will face in the Lords the impressive figure of Swraj Paul, a multi-millionaire Indian businessman. Mr Paul, the founder

of Caparo, the steel group, has spent much of his life trying to come to terms with the death from leukaemia of his daughter Amika, aged five. He gave £1m to London Zoo to rebuild the children's zoo in her honour.

A close friend of Gordon Brown, Mr Paul will be a considerable economic influence, as will his fellow new Labour peer, David Currie, of the London Business School. Professor Currie's recent specialisation of competition regulation will be

a major plank in any new Labour administration's economic mandate.

Perhaps the most influential voice from any side, however, will be that of John Alderdice, head of the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland. Denied a seat at Westminster by traditional sectarian voting loyalties, his neutral Alliance Party will at last be heard centre-stage. Dr Alderdice will take the Liberal Democrat whip on issues other than Ulster.

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New working peers: Maurice Saatchi, Elizabeth Symons, John Taylor and Swraj Paul

Lords regular and irregular

ANTHONY BEVINS

High-profile peers do not always live up to the promise; not all those who have been awarded life peerages attend the Lords with the regularity that might have been expected.

According to the latest statistical analysis by the House of Lords, Baroness Thatcher attended only six of the 142 sitting days in the parliamentary year to November 1995.

On the Labour side, Lord (Richard) Attlee attended the Lords on only five days.

Other part-timers include Lord Deedes, the *Telegraph* journalist and former Tory minister, who attended the House on two days; Lord Young of Graffham, a member of the Thatcher government, who attended on four days; Lord King of Wartnaby, former chairman of British Airways, who attended on 26 days; Lord Menzies, the violinist, who did not attend at all; and Lord Sief, former chairman and managing director of Marks & Spencer, who has also not taken his oath during the current Parliament.

Altogether, at the end of July, there were 1,195 peers in the Lords, of whom 81 are

men, and 378 were created under the Life Peerages Act 1958.

The most dedicated Conservative life peer appears to have been Lord Boyd-Carpenter, the former minister, who missed just one day's attendance in the last parliamentary session.

The most dedicated Labour life peers would appear to be Lord Cocks, the former Labour Chief Whip; Lord Patten, the economist and Opposition spokesman in the Lords; and two former MPs, Lord Molloy and Lord Graham - who all attended on every day the House sat.

On the Liberal Democrat benches, Lord Harris of Greenwich, the former Labour Minister, was the most assiduous attendee, missing only two days, and the most dedicated hereditary peers were Lord Monkswell, who is a Labour peer, and Viscount Simon, a crossbencher, who also attended all 142 days.

As for the cost, the Lords represent good value for money - its democratic function is accepted. And many would argue that because it is free of the slavish submission to the whips so regularly seen in the Commons, it is more likely to defeat the Government.

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feel? It's all a boom just juggling with statistics, say Labour

John Lofus's speech yesterday suggested that the UK "feel good factor" is returning and the shadowed former Conservative

MP said that an average of 1,000 young girls were being sold into prostitution across the country every year.

He said: "I do not see our country getting better." He said

girls deserve a better

future, but the

people don't believe

in the way they are

running things.

He said: "I do not

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news

Arts news: Former director joins chorus of disapproval as cultural jamboree criticised for favouring established performers

Edinburgh Festival 'needs new direction'

DAVID LISTER
Arts News Editor

The harmony of the Edinburgh Festival has been shattered with the former director of the world's biggest arts jamboree arguing it needs to find a new direction.

The unprecedented criticism of the present administration was made in an interview with *The Independent* by Frank Dunlop, who ran the festival

from 1983 to 1991. In a swipe at the current director, Brian McMaster, Mr Dunlop said he was "very admiring of people who have already achieved eminence."

The attack means that this year's Edinburgh Festival is fast becoming one of the most criticised in recent times.

First, in the inaugural Edinburgh Festival Lecture, Professor George Steiner claimed the festival had become too un-

wieldy, had lost its original purpose and should embrace the sciences as well as the arts.

Then Edinburgh impresario and gallery owner Richard Demarco lamented at a public meeting the growing number of stand-up comics on the Fringe. And at the same meeting, Scottish publisher John Calder complained that the official Festival was under-promoted by the Scottish Tourist Office.

In addition, the prestige pro-

duction of the first week, *Elisir*, Robert Lepage's adaptation of *Hamlet*, was cancelled at the last minute.

But Mr Dunlop's analysis is the most significant for the present festival. He said yesterday: "The festival is a fantastic event but in order for it not to get bogged down it has to keep looking for new directions." When he left the festival, Mr Dunlop left behind him a three-year plan, which has not

been acted upon, urging that the Festival become a 'producing unit', commissioning and forming its own productions throughout the year, as well as just presenting ready-made productions from home and abroad.

He repeated the call yesterday, saying: "I proposed that the new Edinburgh Festival Theatre become the centre for the festival and that the festival run it all year round. I wanted

the festival to be more creative, be a production unit and bring people from countries all over the world. The festival has to deal with what it was created for, which was to promote international understanding."

Mr Dunlop said that the festival should create productions from scratch and then tour the world with them. "There should be technical workshops as well based around the Edinburgh Festival Theatre. I know that's

done to extend the dance side." But he added: "I thought it was important to work with new people and young people, not just established artists. You do always need to experiment."

Mr McMaster said: "If you look at the festival over the last 49 years it is clear that each director's personal taste has to a large extent determined the programme. It is perhaps inevitable that another director will have different opinions."

Papers reveal secret trail of Nazi gold

MICHAEL STREETER

Two tons of Nazi gold were handed over to Britain and may have been claimed by highly placed Hitler sympathisers in this country after the Second World War, it was claimed yesterday.

Secret documents only now made public in the US government archives show that the gold, part of a 15-ton haul from the German Foreign Ministry, was sent to a British controlled zone of north Germany in 1945.

According to a letter in 1948 written by Robert Kempner, a senior US prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials, the two tons were then "allegedly turned over to the British".

The 15 tons made up what was apparently called the Ribbentrop Gold Fund, after the German foreign minister, Joachim Von Ribbentrop, who had been ambassador in London before the war.

There is no record of whether this gold ever reached Britain but Labour MP Greville Janner, chairman of the Holocaust Educational Trust, said there was concern about the gold's fate.

He said: "There is a possibility that this gold was sent by Ribbentrop to the British zone and got into the hands of his British friends, some of whom were very highly placed."

"He was a renowned hater of the British but he did have

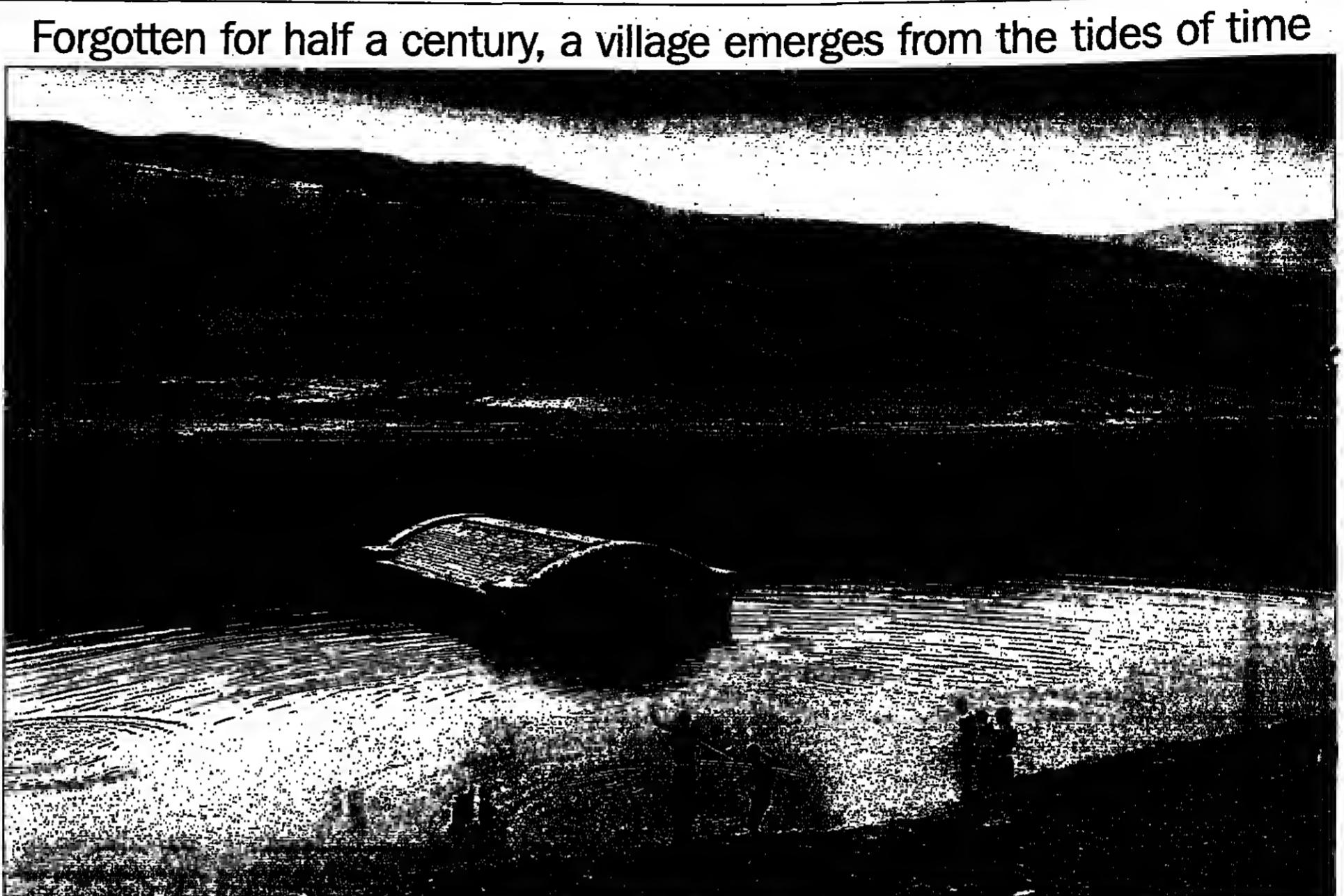
friends here, upper-crust Hitler sympathisers. We may have opened a Pandora's box."

The news of the Ribbentrop gold follows revelations that the Allies, including Britain, knew that the Nazis had placed millions of pounds worth of gold in Swiss bank accounts, much of it stolen from Jews murdered in concentration camps.

There was also an Allied deal with the Swiss to split the proceeds. The Foreign Office, Ministry of Defence and Treasury have launched parallel inquiries into the matter. A Foreign Office spokesman said the latest disclosures would also be investigated.

The letter from Mr Kempner, unearthed by the World Jewish Congress in the US, states that, from his interviews with "several hundred" German diplomats during the course of his war crimes inquiries, he discovered that 11 tons of the Ribbentrop Gold Fund was "hurriedly" moved from Berlin in 1945, and that 6.5 tons went to an American-controlled zone in Austria, two tons to the British-controlled Schleswig-Holstein area, and three tons to the shores of Lake Constance, also American-controlled.

Addressing the political division of the US Army, Mr Kempner urged that the matter should not be dropped because of the potential "force of evil" such gold could constitute in the hands of the wrong people.



Shallow grave: The pump house of the hamlet of Ashton, buried since 1943, is exposed by the falling waters of Ladybower reservoir in the Peak District. The water level has dropped by 13ft because of a continuing drought in the north of England, and reserves have shrunk from 6.25bn to 2.5bn gallons

Photograph: Brian Harris

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Employers take their pick of university graduates

JUDITH JUDD
Education Editor

Students who want a job in law should go to Oxford but those who intend to make it in banking should head for the London School of Economics, according to a new survey of the universities companies prefer.

The survey of 257 major companies and ten subjects by the Performance Indicator project, an independent statistical survey, shows that Oxford and Cambridge, in that order, lead the field in law. They are followed by Durham, Bristol and Edinburgh.

In accountancy, finance and banking, however, companies rate students from the LSE highest, followed by Edinburgh, Manchester, Warwick and Kent.

The two subjects covered in the survey are engineering and

technology, construction and civil engineering, languages, law, electrical engineering, sciences, computing, business, accountancy, finance and banking and economic and social sciences.

In sciences, Cambridge came top and Oxford fifth. Overall, Cambridge came top followed by the University of Manchester Institute of Science and Technology. The two were also first and second in last year's survey. Dr Cliff Pettifor, the project's director, said the vocational nature of the subjects surveyed might explain why Oxford had done less well.

The most improved university in employers' ratings was York which rose in almost every subject area. Newcastle and St Andrews are also going up.

The former polytechnics do not feature in the top ten for any

of the subjects but several are improving their ratings. De Montfort was fifth amongst the improvers and Oxford Brookes, Manchester Metropolitan, Kingston and the University of Central England were also among those who did better than last year.

Another survey of employers' attitudes to universities, which aims to help students using the clearing system to secure a university places, shows only one new university, Glasgow Caledonian, in the top 25.

The survey of 105 leading companies was conducted by Mander Portman and Woodward tutorial colleges to offer students a guide to the likely status of degrees. It shows that employers have a "premier league" of traditional universities.

The table is headed by Oxford, followed by Cambridge, only.

Manchester, Nottingham, Leeds, Birmingham and Edinburgh (joint sixth) and Loughborough, Bristol, Durham, UMIST and Warwick are joint eighth. Almost half the companies said they had definite preferences about recruiting graduates. The tutorial colleges say it is important for students to know how universities are regarded when they are deciding whether or not it is worth retaking their A-levels.

Employers appear to be focusing their recruitment efforts on a limited number of universities. However, new universities are competing by offering courses which help prepare students for particular jobs.

The Performance Indicator Project; Harlaxton College, Grantham, Lincolnshire, NG32 1AG. £24.00. Written enquiries only.

Christ's tops Cambridge league

JUDITH JUDD

Christ's College heads this year's Tompkins league for final results at Cambridge with St John's, which was 20th last year, leaping into second place.

Clare College also did well, rising from 12th to fifth out of the 24 colleges. Churchill, however, was down to 22nd, after being in 15th place last year.

Emmanuel and Corpus Christi also fell back, from third and fourth respectively last year to 12th and 13th this.

New Hall, one of the remaining colleges for women, comes bottom.

King's, top for five successive years until last year, comes third.

The colleges' positions in the rankings, compiled for *The Independent* by Peter Tompkins, a London actuary, are calculated by giving each college five points for a first, three for an upper second, two for a lower second and one for a third.

The results are given in the table on the left as a percentage of the points that a college would have scored if everyone had had a first.

Mr Tompkins also compiles two other Cambridge college

exam leagues. If all three are taken into account, the top three colleges are Christ's, Queens' and Trinity.

One of the other lists covers first and second year exams as well as finals. The right-hand column in the table shows the resulting positions.

The third ranking, which is not shown, cover the percentage of firsts. Christ's did best with 26.9 per cent, followed by Trinity on 26.2 per cent.

New Hall, one of the remaining colleges for women, comes bottom.

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Mr Tompkins also compiles two other Cambridge college

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In the tides of time

their pic graduates

bridge league



*Kathryn Gott, Room Attendant
Golden Lion, Leeds.*



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international

SIGNIFICANT SHORTS

Burundi's new Tutsi military强人 sacked the country's three most powerful military officers. Jean-Luc Ndiaye said Pierre Buyoya, who seized power in a bloodless coup on 25 July, had dismissed the powerful chief-of-staff, the head of the gendarmerie, and the head of the military at the presidential palace. The dismissals of the hardline officers may be a move to placate regional anger over the coup. *Reuter - Bujumbura*

Olympic bomb suspect Richard Jewell passed a lie detector test in which he denied any involvement in the deadly 27 July attack. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* reported. A photographer hired by the security guard's lawyers told the newspaper the test results showed Mr Jewell had nothing to do with the pipe bombing that left two people dead and more than 100 injured at downtown Atlanta's Centennial Olympic Park. *Reuter - Atlanta*

The FBI wants to double its presence in foreign cities over the next four years, the *Washington Post* reported. Under the plan, FBI representatives would be stationed in 46 cities abroad, compared with 23 now, the newspaper said. The expansion would cost \$90m through the year 2000. The number of FBI special agents detailed to the foreign posts would rise from 70 to 129. *AP - Washington*

The US said it was expelling a Cuban diplomat in response to the expulsion of a US diplomat from Cuba. The State Department said Cuba revoked the visa last week of Robin Meyer, after accusing her of spying. The department said it had informed Cuba earlier on Monday that it was taking reciprocal action. *Reuter - Washington*

The Dalai Lama will meet South Africa's President Nelson Mandela in Cape Town on Thursday, a presidential spokesman said. The Tibetan leader said Mr Mandela's government could help to put pressure on China to negotiate the future of the country. *Reuter - Durban*

A Hong Kong dimsum chopped up his mistress' boss into 11 pieces after she stripped off her clothes in his bedroom and tried to seduce him. Zeng Liangxin, 31, a worker from China who went on trial for the murder on Moody, told the court he killed the woman because he feared she would accuse him of rape after he had spurned her. *Reuter - Hong Kong*

Former US President Ronald Reagan and his wife Nancy have reluctantly listed their southern California ranch for sale, an aide said. Mr Reagan announced in 1994 that he was suffering from Alzheimer's disease, and he and his wife have lived solely in their Los Angeles mansion since then. *Reuter - Los Angeles*

A group of 56 Chinese writers, former officials and academics has petitioned Communist Party chief Jiang Zemin, to save cultural relics from the gigantic Three Gorges dam which would flood huge tracts of land. About 130 historical sites, some dating to the Stone Age, could be flooded as soon as next year. *Reuter - Peking*

After decades of tolerating marijuana sales in local coffee shops, some Dutch towns have decided to go into the soft drugs business. Authorities in Delft are to open a new soft drugs shop on 1 September. Profits will be used to fund education campaigns on drug use. *AP - Amsterdam*

French Muslims in battle for Islam

Mosques at centre of power struggle. *Mary Dejevsky* reports

There are French tricolours flying from the minaret of the grand mosque at Evry. You can see them across the concrete-and-grass wasteland that separates the suburbs of Evry and Courcouronnes the moment you emerge from the station, 40 minutes south of central Paris. They are one of the few outward signs of the battle being waged for the hearts, minds, and wallets, of French Muslims.

At the entrance to the mosque, two notices have been posted. The first says: "Those who betray us are not part of us - Word of the Prophet." The second says: "Purge the Evry mosque and cultural centre of those who have used Islam for personal gain."

Last week, the grand mosque at Evry became the first in France to be "liberated" as the victorious faction claims, after a week-long "occupation". An

emergency meeting of the mosque's governing council ousted the director, a Moroccan technician called Khalil Merroun, while he was on holiday and installed a new director and management committee.

The new director is Laredj Nizar, Algerian-born, and a senior probation officer attached to the local prison. The power behind him, judging by the deference shown to her by other committee members, is Khalida Khalil, a much-decorated Algerian war widow and French citizen, who is a member of the recently formed "High Council of French Muslims".

Precisely what the Evry mosque was "liberated" from can barely be divined from the words of committee members. "It was nothing personal. It was

simply a question of management. He never consulted, never called any assembly meeting, never constituted a management committee, wouldn't open the accounts to scrutiny," said Mrs Khalil. "We will run everything with complete openness."

"This mosque has been more

than 14 years in the building, and it is still not finished," said the porter who showed me around. "Huge amounts of

money have gone into it and now they are asking for more."

The scandal of the unfinished

mosque is known throughout

France. But the disgrace is felt

keenly in Evry, because Evry

also managed to commission,

fund and build France's first

Catholic cathedral this

century in less than half the time

taken already by the mosque. A

renewed call for contributions last month was one of the last straws for the Muslims of Evry. "We felt the money was just vanishing," said the porter, signalled with his hands the probability of individuals living in their pockets. "The mosque must be finished."

As the flags on the minaret

suggest, there is much more to

the takeover of the Evry

mosque than allegations against

the ethics or work style of Mr

Merroun. It is also about

Frenchness and the perceived

threat of fundamentalism.

In late June, the French govern-

ment authorised the mosques

of Paris, Evry and Lyons to con-

tract out and supervise the

slaughter of Halal meat them-

selves. Hitherto, it had been a

government function. Because

the contracts are valuable, the decree was seen as a test of legitimacy, for Muslim leaders. Would parishioners sanction a big new source of income for the existing management?

At Evry, a powerful group got

together and said "no". At Paris

and Lyons, mosque leaders have

come under such pressure that

they may not survive. More

Machiavellian observers see the

government's move as a deliber-

ate attempt to destabilise the

Muslim establishment in France.

The advantages to Muslims of

having a central structure are

clear. Catholics and Jews have

a recognised hierarchy and an of-

ficial voice; Muslims do not. For

the authorities, the advantages

are even more obvious. An un-

manageable tangle of organisations

and self-governed mosques

would be replaced by a single hi-

erarchy – and fundamentalism

could be marginalised.

and mullahs were using France as a recruiting ground.

Since the beginning of this year, voices have been raised – and encouraged by pro-government publications and lobbyists – in favour of a central structure for Islam in France, which would ensure a peaceful cohabitation with French culture. Those like Mrs Khalil, Algerian-born, but culturally French, had the encouragement they needed to "reclaim" France for Islam.

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Bosnia's Big Bang alarms the local mayor

CHRISTOPHER BELLAMY
Sokolac

Loud explosions, each produced by four tons of high explosive, echoed across the quiet farmland of Serb controlled Bosnia yesterday. A chocolate-brown mushroom cloud, turning white at the top, soared 5,000 feet into the air. Even two miles away, the blast, filtered down the valley, rattled the canopy on the back of a British army four ton truck before the sound was heard.

In the face of growing confrontation with the local Serbs, the peace implementation force (I-For) was continuing its Operation Volcano, the destruction of an astonishing 400 tons of munitions found in an unauthorised Serb arms dump in the old schoolhouse at Margicici, 25 miles east of Sarajevo. Yesterday the local mayor demanded – and got – discussions with Lieutenant General Sir Michael Walker, commander of Nato troops in Bosnia and deputy commander of I-For.

To ensure nothing went wrong, 2,000 I-For troops – mostly French and Italians, with some British and Portuguese – had been deployed to secure the area, transport the offending ammunition, ensure the evacuation of people and animals, and construct the evasions for its destruction.

Such detonations are taking place three times a day, and the local people are not happy. Milan Tupajic, the tough-looking mayor of Sokolac, the nearest town five miles to the west, arrived at the press conference organised by I-For to put his side of the story. On Monday, Mr Tupajic said the explosions at one of the two prepared sites had to stop because they would damage a deep underground aquifer which is important to the area's water supply. I-For immediately stopped detonations at the site in question, the more westerly site 1. But yesterday it continued to destroy the ammunition – anti-tank and anti-personnel mines, plastic explosives and small arms ammunition – at site 2, two kilometres north-east. Mr Tupajic was controlled but clearly determined. "Site 2 is in the same area", he said. "The water in one place is in the other place three hours later. I am an engineer but I am not a specialist. But you are soldiers. There are no geologists or hydrologists involved. I appeal to you again to postpone this operation."

I-For officers at the scene yesterday were flabbergasted when the Serbs would keep so much ammunition in such a place as a school house. "Four tons makes a hole 7 metres deep and 24 metres across", said Lt Col Max Marrian, a senior I-For spokesman. "Imagine what would happen if all 400 tons had gone off at once on the edge of a village". General Walker said the unauthorised ammunition dump was by far the largest found in Bosnia. For comparison, 3,600 tons was held in declared sites. The offence, he said, was "compounded by many violations", and for that reason I-For had decided to confiscate it and destroy it.

Jordan's shift against Iraq has made it fearful that President Saddam might retaliate. Vengeance is often part of his policy. But it is highly unlikely that Iraq's leader had anything to do with the riots in Jordan. Iraq has no alternative route to the road running through Jordan. At the same time, Palestinian workers with Jordanian passports, many of whom have been residents in

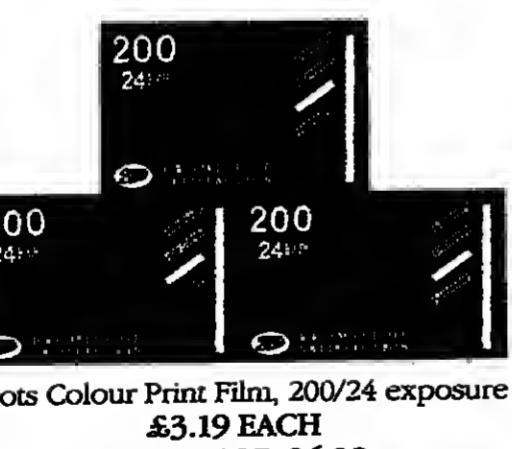
Kuwait for decades, have been forced to go back to Amman.

Two initiatives in the last two years have failed to change this situation. In 1994, King Hussein signed a peace treaty with Israel. This raised expectations of a "peace dividend" in Jordan in the shape of foreign aid from the US and Europe, as well as more investment. Neither has been forthcoming in the quantities hoped for by Jordanians.

In 1995, in the wake of the flight of General Hussein Kamel al-Majid, President Saddam's son-in-law, to Jordan, the King began to shift away from his previously friendly relations with Iraq. Restrictions were tightened on the road which is Iraq's lifeline across Jordan's eastern desert. Iraqi opposition groups were allowed to base themselves in Amman.

Again, little aid was forthcoming. King Hussein's policies towards Israel and Iraq may have made strategic sense by bringing him closer to Washington and Tel Aviv, but they were never popular. The Israeli ambassador to Amman spent months trying to find somebody

3 for the 2



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Iraq behind bread riots, says Hussein

Patrick Coburn
on a conspiracy
theory which
has no believers



Breadline: Khalaf Ahmad, 52, buys loaves in Karak, yesterday during a two-hour curfew. Photograph: AP

Karak – King Hussein appeared in a confidante, almost jaunty, mood as he blamed Iraq for being the hidden hand behind the riots which followed the decision of his government to double the price of bread.

"The situation is wholly under control," the King told Jordanians in a television interview on Sunday night. "Everything has been very quiet in the country." As for the rioters, who had burned banks and public buildings as symbols of government authority, they "were either educated in Iraq or had sympathies towards Iraq".

The theory of the Iraqi conspiracy finds few believers in Karak, where the riots started after Friday prayers last week, or anywhere else. A local boy had a simpler explanation of what happened. He told a reporter: "Karak is a poor town. I earn 70 Jordanian dinars (£70) a month to support my mother and brother. How can I buy bread?"

Although he is one of the most skilful political players in the Middle East, it is mysterious that King Hussein should appear so confident. For the riots are only the latest in a series of political and economic blows to hit Jordan over the last decade. Sandwiched between Israel, Iraq, Syria and Saudi Arabia, the kingdom with its 4.2 million people, and no oil, is always the weakest player in the region.

Its economic prosperity is particularly vulnerable to diplomatic setbacks because it is dependent on foreign aid and remittances from Jordanians working abroad. Since the Gulf crisis, foreign aid from the US and the Arab oil states has largely dried up because of Jordan's refusal to join the alliance against Saddam. Hussein, the Iraqi leader, after his invasion of Kuwait. At the same time, Palestinian workers with Jordanian passports, many of whom have been residents in

Amman spent months trying to find somebody

to buy bread, and went away.

2 sport

Christie's European ambition has mixed reception

Athletics

SIMON TURNBULL

Linford Christie's reluctance to go, gently or otherwise, into that good night was welcomed with "mixed feelings" yesterday by the man in charge of Britain's track and field team.

Malcolm Arnold, the British Athletic Federation's director of coaching, revealed that he had known since the Olympic

Games of Christie's desire to extend his international shelf-life beyond what was billed as the captain's last hurrah for Britain, the Bupa Challenge match at Gateshead on Monday night.

"Linford told me in Atlanta that he would like to run in the European Cup next June," Arnold said. That prior knowledge of what Christie made public after finishing runner-up to Iahn Regis in the 200 metres on Monday did not prevent the

British athletics publicity machine churning out pre-meeting hype about the veteran's international farewell, which undoubtedly helped to sell all but 400 of 11,700 tickets.

"That is the responsibility of the federation's commercial and public relations department," Arnold maintained. The morning after the night before, Britain's head coach was more concerned about the future: one that, for him, next year will

pose the dilemma of whether to remain loyal to a 37-year-old icon or invest faith in the new generation of British sprinters. "Linford will take his place in the queue with our other sprinters," Arnold said. "If he's good enough to get us eight points I'll take him to Munich." The Bavarian capital is the venue for the 1997 European Cup and Christie, should he make it to the start line in the Olympic Stadium, would be

chasing his eighth consecutive 100m victory in the competition.

Not since 1985, when Lincoln Asquith finished fourth in Moscow, has Britain picked a different sprinter for that particular job. Though Christie's reputation stopped him short of actually saying it, Arnold would not be disappointed to see a fresh face, such as that of Ian Mackie.

The 21-year-old from Dumfries was inspired to take up the sport, under the guidance of

John Macdonald, father of Linsey Macdonald, Britain's youngest-ever track and field Olympic medallist, when Christie signed an autograph for him after a meeting in Edinburgh six years ago. Since returning from Atlanta, where he qualified for the 100m semi-finals, Mackie has been invited to join Christie's management company, Nuff Respect. He matched strides with the Olympic champion, Donovan Bailey, until the final 20 metres

of the 100m at Gateshead, missing his personal best by 0.01sec with a time of 10.25.

"I have got mixed feelings," Arnold conceded. "When Linford does go we'll miss him. I think people in this country don't realise what he's done. But I'd like him to go out in a dignified fashion and we've seen

the best from him.

"He loves the sport and he's finding it hard to let go. There

has to be time, though, for the youngsters to be set free." That time, it seems, is not yet nigh.

Arsenal made to wait for Wenger

Football

Arsenal yesterday refused to officially confirm that 46-year-old Arsene Wenger is to become their latest manager. An announcement was expected from Highbury but the north London club have had their plans put on hold by the Frenchman's current club, Grampus Eight, with the Japanese seemingly unwilling to play ball over the long-term future of their coach.

Wenger admitted: "It will be very soon, but I cannot say exactly when. Perhaps early next week. We have agreed, but they [Grampus Eight] want more time."

The former Monaco manager is under contract at Gram-

pus until November and the Gunners may be forced to extend the reign of caretaker-manager Stewart Houston if Wenger is unable to secure his

appointment. Houston undertook a similar role when George Graham was sacked in February 1995 and took the club to the European Cup-Winners' Cup final. Wenger, though, may already be pulling the strings behind the scenes at Arsenal and is reported to have submitted a list of top-class players that he wants to challenge the likes of Manchester United, Newcastle and Liverpool for the game's honours.

His compatriot David Ginola has been linked with a move to the capital following reports

that he has been increasingly unsettled at St James' Park after the summer transfer linking him to Barcelona.

Wenger said: "He is a very good player for Newcastle, but the balance of the team is the most important thing. It is not only the quality of a player which matters, but whether he would fit in with the team."

The Arsenal striker Ian Wright revealed yesterday that Houston and his coaching staff did not speak to him for "three or four days" after the player spoke his mind on Riach's controversial sacking.

Houston and other club stalwarts like Tony Adams, Paul Merson and Martin Keown have publicly voiced their disapproval of Riach's removal last Monday, only five days before the start of the new season.

But Wright, who stunned Arsenal fans by putting in a transfer request after a series of spats with Riach last season, indicated in a national newspaper article last week he was not unhappy to see the back of the former Bolton boss. He also staunchly defended the club vice-chairman David Dein, the man seen by many as the prime mover in Riach's dismissal.

Wright said: "I spoke my mind when Bruce Riach got the sack and some people didn't like it. The players were happy, and what has been said about the boys having a go at me is crap."

"But the coaching staff blanked me. They didn't talk to me for three or four days, but I've always said what I mean and if people can't take it they can kiss my ass. I just wanted the fans to know the situation as I saw it. Everyone knows Bruce Riach and I didn't see eye to eye, but in the end I respected him as a manager and wish him well in the future."

Manchester City, who hope to sign another Arsenal striker, Paul Dickov, for £750,000 are ready to cut their losses on Scottish striker Gerry Creaney and the suspended Paul Gascoigne and injured pair David Robertson and Alan McLaren.

This might be the best and last chance for Rangers to reach the final stages. Uefa, Europe's governing body, plan to alter the format of the competition and the Scottish champions could find themselves playing on one, but two pre-qualifying ties, starting next July.

Rangers ready to reap reward

Peter van Vossen could be about to fire Rangers into a Champions' League place, having admitted that he wanted to quit Ibrox during the summer.

With four goals in his last two matches, the Dutch forward could be a key player today when the Scots play the Russians of Alania Vladikavkaz.

Walter Smith's team take a 3-1 lead into their preliminary round second leg tie and are being promised a hot reception by the Alania coach, Valery Gazayev, and 40,000 locals to the North Ossetia outpost.

They are within 40 miles from the border of war-torn Chechnya, but Smith insists the match itself is high risk enough for it to be his greatest concern. And for van Vossen simply to be enjoying his football again is an escape to victory after a turbulent campaign last year.

"It was the worst season I have experienced," said van Vossen, who moved first to Istanbulspor in Turkey from Ajax in the summer of 1995 and then to Glasgow in January in a swap deal for Oleg Salenko. He quickly inherited Salenko's misfit tag at Ibrox, but over the close season a heart-to-heart with Smith salvaged his career.

"At the start of the summer I spoke to the manager and told him I wanted to return in Holland because I was homesick," van Vossen said.

"There were clubs at home interested, but after my holidays I came back and had another talk with Walter Smith. I asked

him if he thought I was a good player and he said I might be, but I had to prove it.

"Now football is fun again for me suddenly. I could have gone back to Holland, but wherever you go, you take your problems with you. Right now, Rangers are the best club for me."

Ally McCoist's inclusion may rest on the fitness of Gordano Durie, who scored a preliminary round winner and is being promised a hot reception by the Alania coach, Valery Gazayev, and 40,000 locals to the North Ossetia outpost.

Rangers are reaching for the Champions' League stage - worth some £5m to the qualifiers - for the third time in five years with their stars on a reported £30,000-a-man bonus as reward. "What did four seasons ago in 1992-93 when we pushed Marseilles for a place in the final helped persuade Brian Laudrup to come to Scotland."

The Everton defender Matt Jackson's stop-start loan move to Queen's Park Rangers has finally been completed and he will make his debut in Friday's televised match at Portsmouth.

Keith Curle's hopes of making his debut for Wolves have been hit by a new injury setback. Curle has had his calf in plaster and is likely to be sidelined for at least another week. But Wolves were cheered by the news that striker Don Goodman is set to be playing by October, six months ahead of schedule after fracturing his skull against Huddersfield in April.

If Whelan is ruled out Andy Duchs, who came on for Whelan in the 3-0 defeat, will make his full home debut. Atkinson is also considering giving a debut to the Belgian full-back Reggie Genua.

Hamilton anger at Ukraine officials

The Northern Ireland manager Bryan Hamilton has criticised the Ukrainian authorities for keeping him in the dark during the build-up to the World Cup qualifying match between the sides in Belfast next week.

Hamilton is furious that the Irish Football Association were not informed about a warm-up match the Ukraine played against Lithuania in Kiev last week - they won it 5-2 - from which he could have sized up the Windsor Park opposition.

It leaves Hamilton with only eight minutes on video of the Ukraine in action. But he remains hopeful that the players in his 18-man squad named yesterday may yet go to the Group Nine match a week on Saturday with more detailed knowledge of their rivals.

"They were supposed to notify us about any matches they were playing before they came to Belfast. That's the customary procedure and I'm very disappointed they didn't stick to it," Hamilton said.

"We could have had someone at last week's match and at present I know very little about the Ukrainians. An eight-minute tape of highlights doesn't reveal all that much."

"But I'm not giving up. I think I'm close to finding another source who can come up with more extensive coverage of the Ukraine in action. I am bringing my squad together next Tuesday and I'd like to have more material on the Ukraine to show them."

Hamilton has recalled Leicester's Neil Lennon, French-based striker Phil Gray and Coventry's close-season signing Michael O'Neill to join up with the players who field European champions Germany to a 1-1 draw in Belfast in May.

Leannon did not play in that game as he was involved in Leicester's Premiership play-off final at Wembley a few days earlier, while Gray was in hospital for knee surgery.

O'Neill is back having left out of the Germany fixture as Hamilton felt he was not in the best shape psychologically due to being in dispute with his former club, Hibernian. But there is no place for established internationals Alan McDonald, Steve Morrow and Gerry Taggart.

"We've widened our squad over the last year," Hamilton said. "There are now 24 players in contention so everyone is looking over his shoulder."

Athletics

The International Amateur Athletic Federation yesterday said they had a strong case against the Australian sprinter Darren Cope against the Australian sprinter Steve Asquith over alleged steroid use. The 20-year-old proved positive for the anabolic steroid stanazolol at a meeting in May, but was allowed to run at the Athens Olympics after being cleared by an Athletics Australia hearing that ruled there could have been a mix-up or tampering with the test samples.

Meanwhile the IAAF may stop nations from competing in May's World Cup if they are found to be in breach of the rules of the Capoibio and the Italian high jumper Antonella Bevilacqua, who also competed at Atlanta after failing a test before the Games.

BUPA CHALLENGE (Bathurst Stadium): Saturday, 24 August, 10.30am. Gates: £10.00; 12-16, 5-10, 12-17, 18-21, 22-25, 26-30, 31-35, 36-40, 41-45, 46-50, 51-55, 56-60, 61-65, 66-70, 71-75, 76-80, 81-85, 86-90, 91-95, 96-100, 101-105, 106-110, 111-115, 116-120, 121-125, 126-130, 131-135, 136-140, 141-145, 146-150, 151-155, 156-160, 161-165, 166-170, 171-175, 176-180, 181-185, 186-190, 191-195, 196-200, 201-205, 206-210, 211-215, 216-220, 221-225, 226-230, 231-235, 236-240, 241-245, 246-250, 251-255, 256-260, 261-265, 266-270, 271-275, 276-280, 281-285, 286-290, 291-295, 296-300, 301-305, 306-310, 311-315, 316-320, 321-325, 326-330, 331-335, 336-340, 341-345, 346-350, 351-355, 356-360, 361-365, 366-370, 371-375, 376-380, 381-385, 386-390, 391-395, 396-398, 399-401, 402-404, 405-407, 408-409, 410-411, 412-413, 414-415, 416-417, 418-419, 420-421, 422-423, 424-425, 426-427, 428-429, 430-431, 432-433, 434-435, 436-437, 438-439, 440-441, 442-443, 444-445, 446-447, 448-449, 450-451, 452-453, 454-455, 456-457, 458-459, 460-461, 462-463, 464-465, 466-467, 468-469, 470-471, 472-473, 474-475, 476-477, 478-479, 480-481, 482-483, 484-485, 486-487, 488-489, 490-491, 492-493, 494-495, 496-497, 498-499, 499-500, 501-502, 503-504, 505-506, 507-508, 509-510, 511-512, 513-514, 515-516, 517-518, 519-520, 521-522, 523-524, 525-526, 527-528, 529-530, 531-532, 533-534, 535-536, 537-538, 539-540, 541-542, 543-544, 545-546, 547-548, 549-550, 551-552, 553-554, 555-556, 557-558, 559-560, 561-562, 563-564, 565-566, 567-568, 569-570, 571-572, 573-574, 575-576, 577-578, 579-580, 581-582, 583-584, 585-586, 587-588, 589-590, 591-592, 593-594, 595-596, 597-598, 599-600, 601-602, 603-604, 605-606, 607-608, 609-610, 611-612, 613-614, 615-616, 617-618, 619-620, 621-622, 623-624, 625-626, 627-628, 629-630, 631-632, 633-634, 635-636, 637-638, 639-640, 641-642, 643-644, 645-646, 647-648, 649-650, 651-652, 653-654, 655-656, 657-658, 659-660, 661-662, 663-664, 665-666, 667-668, 669-670, 671-672, 673-674, 675-676, 677-678, 679-680, 681-682, 683-684, 685-686, 687-688, 689-690, 691-692, 693-694, 695-696, 697-698, 699-700, 701-702, 703-704, 705-706, 707-708, 709-710, 711-712, 713-714, 715-716, 717-718, 719-720, 721-722, 723-724, 725-726, 727-728, 729-730, 731-732, 733-734, 735-736, 737-738, 739-740, 741-742, 743-744, 745-746, 747-748, 749-750, 751-752, 753-754, 755-756, 757-758, 759-760, 761-762, 763-764, 765-766, 767-768, 769-769, 770-771, 772-773, 774-775, 776-777, 778-779, 779-780, 780-781, 781-782, 782-783, 783-784, 784-785, 785-786, 786-787, 787-788, 788-789, 789-790, 790-791, 791-792, 792-793, 793-794, 794-795, 795-796, 796-797, 797-798, 798-799, 799-800, 800-801, 801-802, 802-803, 803-804, 804-805, 805-806, 806-807, 807-808, 808-809, 809-810, 810-811, 811-812, 812-813, 813-814, 814-815, 815-816, 816-817, 817-818, 818-819, 819-820, 820-821, 821-822, 822-823, 823-824, 824-825, 825-826, 826-827, 827-828, 828-829, 829-830, 830

4 the cricket pages

Counties must put England first

The Acfield Report is not an awe-inspiring document. This should not be seen as a criticism of the lunatics in the working party: more than there was actually not that much which could be done to improve the management of English cricket.

One essential fact was grasped, however, which was that this management must be free from the sometime parochial interests and influence of the first-class counties. Hence their cornerstone recommendation of an England Management Committee to run all aspects of England's international cricket. In quote from the report: "The working party recommends that the EMC be delegated by the TCCB [Test and County Cricket Board] to decide on and implement all aspects of the selection, management and

administration of England teams." Autonomy for the EMC is essential if it is to work. It is the sort of power which I believe Raymond Illingworth and Ted Dexter both sought and which often comes with an authority of one. Yet the working party recognised the inherent difficulties of this dictatorial approach and instead opted for a committee, but one which could be autocratic in its powers because of its independence from the TCCB. It would have "delegated" powers for "all aspects".

Now we find, however, that on the point which most players would regard as the most important, the TCCB have clipped this new committee's wings. The chairman of the EMC will not have the right to withdraw players from county matches if he deems it necessary.

Tim Curtis, chairman of the Professional Cricketers' Association, says the Acfield Report is a step in the right direction

Dominic Cork will continue to average playing two days out of three throughout the year whilst his Australian counterpart, Glenn McGrath, will play only one out of three.

Our own experience at Worcester this year does not help my argument, in that Graeme Hick's omission from our line-up for one game did not lead to renewed and refreshed success for him. However, Worcester in an enlightened manner recognised the pre-eminence of the national side. Only if this spirit proliferates will we bridge

this county versus country divide and improve our national team's chances of success.

Other aspects of the report address this same central problem of club pulling in the opposite direction from country. I am delighted to see in the report that, whilst the TCCB will continue to nominate candidates to sit on the various committees and act as selectors, the EMC retains the right to select from outside these nominations. This, combined with the payment of selectors, should ensure the best possible people are involved. It is not

simply a question of people being put forward who have served their time in a county administration and deserve a chance or who, through being retired or personal financial circumstances, have the time and opportunity to fulfil such roles. The basis for selection for these crucial roles will be broadened and quality should emerge as the determining factor.

Further to this, the continuity of the EMC's selection process between Under-19, A and full England teams should improve matters greatly, particularly in the A team where too often it seems local county favourites have been rewarded after a good season. Again, the county interests, a pain on the back for having done well, come before a hard-headed, forward-thinking ap-

proach to selection and management.

In this question of selection and the central concept of a management committee the Acfield Report grasps a significant nettle. In other areas it is notably woolly, spawning four committees to implement its various plans and I would not have thought that the process for selecting the England scorer for each tour worthy of quite so much debate.

Perhaps the wooliness was an attempt to disguise and slip through the crucial point of the independence of the EMC. It didn't work. The TCCB's refusal to allow the EMC ultimate powers is disappointing evidence that the differences between club and country will continue to undermine our international efforts.

Lawless Essex still looking dangerous

THE WEEK AHEAD

James Whitaker, hoping to lead Leicestershire to their first County Championship for 21 years in his first season as captain, reckons five factors will determine one of the closest and most fascinating title races.

The wicket, he believes, will be the side whose progress is least disturbed by injuries and England call-ups, and who find favourable pitches and enjoy the best luck with the toss and the weather.

What he did not mention was the effect of call-ups to the Australian side currently preparing for the Singer Cup in Sri Lanka, which may well have a direct bearing on the effectiveness of two of the challenging group. The limited-overs tournament, which runs until 7 September, deprives Yorkshire of Michael Bevan and Essex of Stuart Law.

It may be argued that Yorkshire's dream is already dead, the erstwhile leaders having dropped 27 points behind four consecutive defeats. This may be true, but a recovery would have been more likely with Bevan present.

In the case of fifth-placed Essex, however, the loss threatens to undermine their best form of the season, a run of four consecutive Championship victories, which has prompted those sceptical of the Midland challenge represented by Derbyshire and Leicestershire to speculate that the biggest threat to Kent and Surrey may come from Chelmsford.

Essex have been impressive lately, with two victories by an innings and another by 292 runs among their recent haul. Law, the 27-year-old all-rounder from Brisbane, has made a major contribution, scoring 363 runs at an average of almost 73 in this period, lifting his aggregate for the season in first-class matches to 1,361 runs - 43 more than Graham Gooch.

It is in Essex's favour that they finish their programme with two fixtures at headquarters, against spent Sussex and unthreatening Glamorgan, by which time Law will be available again, if required. In the meantime, however, Essex must negotiate what they anticipate will be more difficult matches against Gloucestershire at Colchester, starting tomorrow, followed by Yorkshire at Headingley and Warwickshire at Edgbaston.

Essex have a 20-point gap to close on the surprise leaders Derbyshire and 18 on second-placed Kent but have a match in hand on both. Dean Jones's team, who went top when victory over Nottinghamshire on Monday gave them six wins in eight rounds, take a breather now before returning to face Worcestershire at Chesterfield, Somerset at Taunton, then Warwickshire and Durham at Derby.

Kent, who would have had a comfortable lead had rain not deprived them of a probable win at Derby in late July, go to Cardiff tomorrow and meet Nottinghamshire at Tunbridge Wells next week before sitting out a round, concluding against Hampshire at Canterbury and Gloucestershire at Bristol.

Having suffered the ignominy of the wooden spoon last season, Kent's coach, Daryl Foster, believes amends can be made in the most handsome fashion, but confidence is also high in Surrey (third) and Leicestershire (fourth), each of whom, like Essex, have five matches left. Surrey, at Trent Bridge tomorrow, lose Alec Stewart and Graham Thorpe to Test calls but will probably ask Chris Lewis to dash north if not required at The Oval.

The Texaco Trophy may mean all three missing next week's clash with Warwickshire at The Oval, where Northamptonshire and Worcestershire are also due before the season is out, with Glamorgan at Cardiff in between.

Leicestershire, for whom Whitaker is poised to return from a calf muscle injury, take on Hampshire at Grace Road, starting tomorrow, with two more matches at their headquarters, against Somerset and Middlesex, sandwiched trips to Nottinghamshire and Durham.

Sunday's AXA Equity and Law League programme finds second against first when Nottinghamshire and Surrey meet at Trent Bridge, while Worcestershire (fifth) and Warwickshire (fourth) clash at New Road. Third-placed Yorkshire - on equal points with Surrey and Notts - face Lancashire at Headingley.

Jon Culley

Bazid Khan, of Pakistan, is caught behind by the Indian wicketkeeper, Pardeep Chawla, in the Under-15 World Cup final at Lord's yesterday

Photograph: Robert Hallam

Lord's given a glimpse of the future

Ironic, isn't it, that while the great and the good of county cricket gathered at Lord's to peddle their sophisms and sophistries in shuttered chambers, the future of the game was right out here for all to see. And it wasn't English. It was Asian, with India and Pakistan contesting the final of the Lombard World Challenge - the under-15 World Cup. Both had come to Lord's unbroken in the two-week tournament.

Ironic? Certainly. But not surprising. I've played Taps for English cricket too many times to be blowing my own trumpet, but I wrote back in 1991 that cricket was going this way. Not many will have read it then - and probably no one connected with the running of English cricket.

Commenting on a projected tour of Sri Lanka by Australia and New Zealand in July and August of that year, I wrote: "Such a programme means that the mid-year months are no longer an English preserve and opens the way for a power base incorporating the Asian and Australasian countries, with South Africa close enough to support it. Such an alliance would threaten England's traditional hegemony."

What we witnessed yesterday, however, concerned more than the

balance of power within the game. It concerned the whole approach to what cricket is. It can be the manifestation of a nation's spirit, and from the way India and Pakistan have played in this tournament, the teenage Asian spirit is an unfettered bird compared with the sons of no-conformist Anglo-Saxon stock.

So with their supporters yesterday - you don't hear noise like this at a county game. With their flags and chants this could have been Calcutta or Lahore, rather than Lord's. They were raising the roof of the Mound Stand with their impasse "Zindabad (long live) Pakistan" choruses and their shrilling and whistling for every run scored and every ball fielded.

In England's two games that mattered, first against India and in their semi-final against Pakistan, they were put in to bat, revolved around

As two Asian countries contest the final of the Under-15 World Cup, Graeme Wright examines the threat to English hegemony

displayed grit and determination in the field to claw their way back after the Asian batsmen with all the skill of a Stratford or Frased. There was also a slow left-amer in a maroon turban to rekindle memories of the days when spin was the kernel of the Indian attack. Their batsmen, as they showed against South Africa in the semi-finals, could be unstoppable. Needing 263 to win, and reduced to 9 for 2, they came out with bats blazing after tea at Trent Bridge and won by five wickets.

Pakistan's 222 for 7, after they were put in to bat, revolved around

80 in 109 balls by the opener, Hassan Raza. Initially he played second fiddle to his fellow opener, Tauseef Umar, a left-hander gifted with delicious timing on both sides of the wicket. India's captain, Rettinder Sandhu, broke that stand, and came back at the end with two more wickets. But it was their off-spinner, Ishaq Ganda, who prevented Pakistan building a formidable total on a lunchtime base of 120 for 2 from 36 overs.

Off for 111 on his first four balls after the interval, Ganda bowled second ball at first slip, drove Imran Qadri's googly to short extra cover. When Mohammad Kifayat was stumped in the 30th over, the ball spinning back off his bat after he had danced down the pitch to Shoaib Malik's off spin, there was no containing Pakistan's voracious supporters.

Now, though India required more than four an over, the pressure was on. Suddenly the heroes looked like 15-year-old boys. Sandhu was the exception. Bating or bowling he is a class player, and with an unheated 82 off to add to his three wickets for 24 runs, the captain carried his side to World Cup glory. Three times Pakistan's supporters came flooding over the boundary, but it was to no avail. In the end the "Zindabads" were silent. **Score: Pakistan 222 for 7; India 263 for 9. India won by five wickets.**

Five youngsters who may have an international future

Jimmy Adams (England) A tall, accomplished left-hander from Stow-on-the-Wold, he showed with his 141 against Canada and 69 against India his ability to score all around the wicket. His pugnacious temperament and good attitude should stand him in good stead.

John Francis (England) A fast bowler from Wiltshire, he showed with his 141 against Canada and 69 against India his ability to score all around the wicket. His pugnacious temperament and good attitude should stand him in good stead.

Simon Sowerby (South Africa) A tall, fast bowler from the Cape, he showed with his 141 against Canada and 69 against India his ability to score all around the wicket. His pugnacious temperament and good attitude should stand him in good stead.

Adam Vanderschueren (Belgium) A fast bowler from Belgium, he showed with his 141 against Canada and 69 against India his ability to score all around the wicket. His pugnacious temperament and good attitude should stand him in good stead.

David Tait (Australia) A fast bowler from Australia, he showed with his 141 against Canada and 69 against India his ability to score all around the wicket. His pugnacious temperament and good attitude should stand him in good stead.

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Lawless Essex still looking dangerous

THE WEEK AHEAD

James Whitaker hoping to lead his team to the first County Championship for 21 years in his last tour, the first of the five fixtures to feature one of the closest and most exciting title races.

The winner is believed to be the side whose players have the most discipline and spirit and the most favourable pitches and conditions with the toss and the weather.

What has been mentioned and the effect of collapses in the Australian currently expected for the Series in Sri Lanka which may well bear fruit bearing on the effectiveness of the challenging group. The overs tournament which runs from September 1 to 15 September, Captain Yorkie Michael Bevan and Essex's Steve

It may be argued that Yorkie's dream is already dead, the top leaders having dropped 27 points behind four consecutive defeats. It may be true, but it is even more likely to be the case with Bevan.

In the case of fifth-placed Essex, the last three days under their best form of the season or four consecutive championships which has produced three wins in the Middlesex, three against Derbyshire and one against the leaders, the last three days of the season, and the last three days of the year.

Essex have been impressive

in the last three days under their best form of the season or four consecutive championships which has produced three wins in the Middlesex, three against Derbyshire and one against the leaders, the last three days of the season, and the last three days of the year.

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the cricket pages 5

A new lease of life for the far pavilions



Part of the British way of life: the 70-year-old pavilion at Hurstbourne Priors, Hampshire (above), where funding is being sought for an extension; (clockwise from below right) Pateley Bridge Cricket Club, North Yorkshire, is also seeking lottery money to make improvements; the pavilion at Woodgreen CC, in Hampshire, boasts a new extension; and Ripley Castle CC, North Yorkshire, has a new, timbered pavilion

Photographs: Robert Hallam/Victoria Matthews

National Lottery cash is helping village cricket clubs to do a bit of home improvement.

Christian Dymond reports

socialised in the same room. Even the windows were devoid of glass.

But, thanks to a £37,000 wooden-and-thatched extension (£12,980 came from the Sports Council fund and £10,000 from the Foundation for Sport and the Arts), there are now two changing-rooms, hot showers, a disabled toilet, heating, lighting and glazed windows.

"It's a dream come true. We thought we'd have to raise the money ourselves, which would have taken many, many years," says Ray Mortimer, the club's secretary.

Martin Coales, chairman of Bomer Heath Cricket Club, in Shropshire, talks of "money beyond our wildest dreams" to describe the £50,865 and £28,500 that have come to the club from the Sports Council and the Foundation for Sport and the Arts respectively.

A new pavilion (replacing a wooden Nissen hut) and new ground facilities that together have cost £130,000 will be officially opened at the start of the next season.

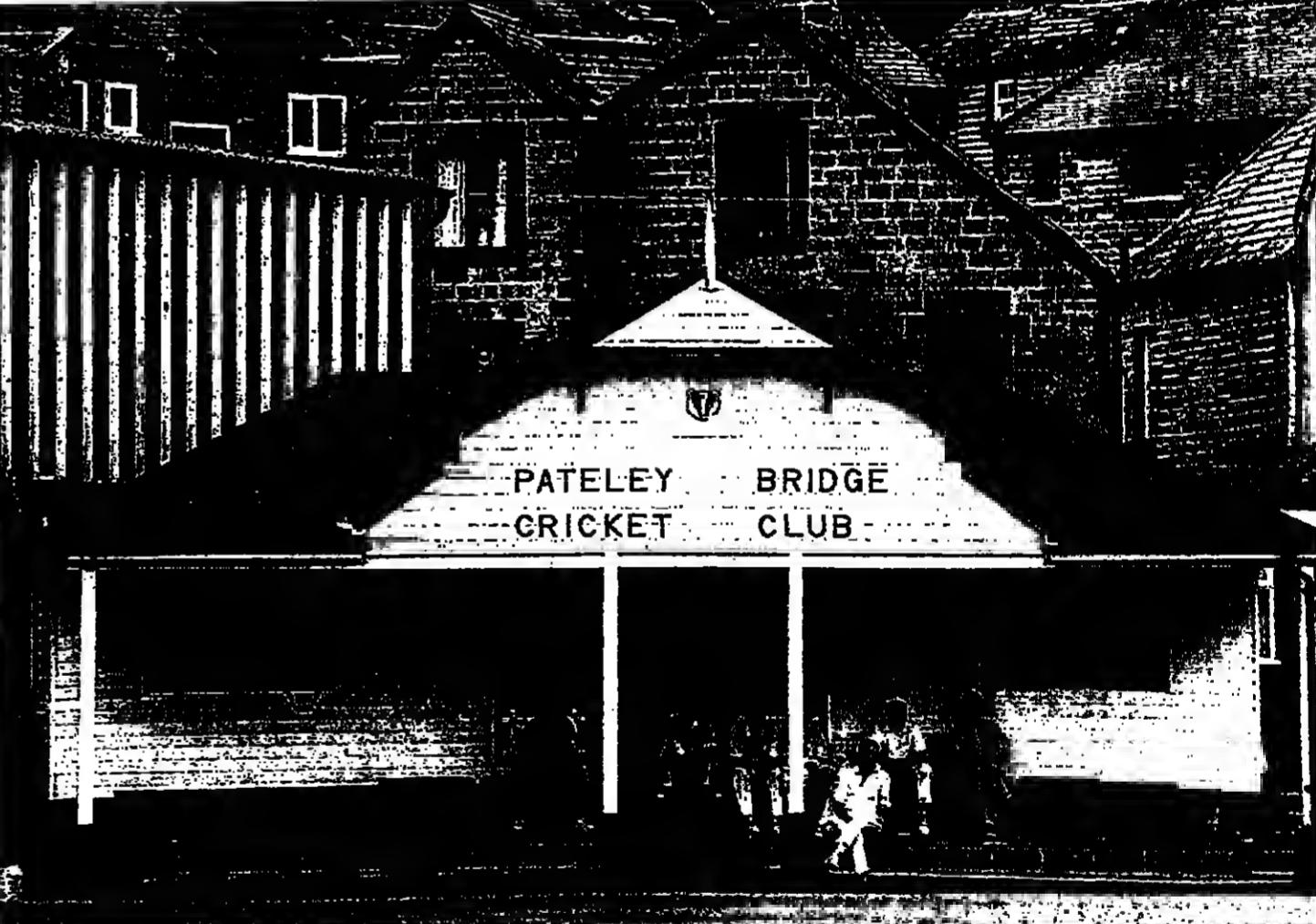
Improved facilities, however, do not necessarily herald an end to the rich variety of clubhouses that are one of the great features of village and small town cricket.

Keswick got a £87,364 sports pavilion in 1994 to replace one that, according to the cricket club captain, Keith Richardson, was "dropping to bits". But the incorporation of the old pavilion's Lakeland green slate roof, two ventilation turrets and balcony timber gives it a look that belies its age.

Traditional, too, is the three-and-a-half-year-old pavilion at Ripley, near Harrogate. The club wanted something that would blend in with the village and nearby Ripley Castle, so went for a timbered building with a veranda from a Worcestershire company called Courtyard Designs.

"The village cricket pavilion and the ground are part of our British way of life," says Suzanne White of The Cricketer magazine, which for the 25th year is organising the national knock-out cup competition for village cricket clubs.

Caldy and Langley cricket clubs will meet in the Alliance and Leicester Giro Village Cricket Championship final at Lord's on 1 September. Hurstbourne Priors and Pateley Bridge, alas, were knocked out in the first round.



PATELEY BRIDGE CRICKET CLUB



coming soon... boxing 7

Salford's Viking king ready for a rampage

When Steve Foster steps into the ring, a horde of followers push the longboats out. **Glyn Leach** reports

Evelids did not bat when Kirk Douglas and Tony Curtis, Americans of Jewish descent, played the Vikings in the eponymous action movie that has become a Bank Holiday/Sunday afternoon staple – hardly Jeremy Irons being asked to play a Pakistani, was it? But it is doubtful that the Dumb and the DA knew what they were staring with their cult of the counterfeit Norsemen.

Longboats in Nineties Greater Manchester? Horned hordes roaming through Salford? At the beck and call of a pseudo-Scandinavian warlord with not a drop of Nordic blood in him?

Nobody could have predicted the advent of Steve "The Viking" Foster, the Commonwealth and IBF Intercontinental light-middleweight champion and a man approaching The Rev Jim Jones's standards of power over the flock, but Foster's congregation is more capable of spending its disposable income.

Foster, in training at Salford's Phoenix Camp gym for what until recently seemed a most unlikely world title challenge next month, has long been British boxing's premier hands-on ticket-seller.

No beneficiary of multimedia marketing, but a man with huge grassroots popularity in his own locale, who knows the people buying tickets to his fights because he has sold them those tickets himself. Foster shifted a best-yet £40,000 worth for his last contest, when he outpointed Chris Pyatt for the Commonwealth title, all taken from friends, family and in the pubs and clubs of Salford. Hardly surprising, then, that Foster should recently have made his first foray into legitimate boxing promotion. The show sold out, with a thousand prospective

punters having to be turned away. He stages his second promotion tomorrow night in Salford.

Foster, 35, candidly admits that exquisite boxing skills are not the root of his status. "We all know I'm not Sugar Ray Leonard," he said. "I trade on me fitness. I'm always in great shape. I'm a believer that most of the skill goes out of a fight after five or six rounds. After that, it's down to who wants it most."

Modestly, Foster attributes his popularity to Salford having been starved of boxing success. True, but a theory making light of Foster's charisma and reputation locally as an all-round decent guy. And until the end of last year,

Foster was anything but successful, having lost three mid-level title challenges. Yet, his following was no smaller than now.

Central to the success that causes his promoter, Frank Warren, to term

Foster "a phenomenon" has been the Viking theme introduced five years ago when someone suggested a

catchy French *nom de guerre* might perk up a flagging career. As a teenager, Foster's long blond hair, cropped today, and love of a brawl – "I were a bit of a handbag" – earned him his Norse nickname from drinking friends. "You're like a hoody Viking you." Two and two made four.

But a teenager's drinking name would become Foster's meal ticket in his mid-thirties as a father of three (a 19-year-old daughter and sons aged 15 and 8), a former bricklayer and Salford publican who readily admits: "It's no secret, I still like a drink."

It is surreal to witness the thousands of horned helmets and borrowed fireside-rug cloaks in the crowd when Foster fights.

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Steve Foster in the gym: 'Me trainer, Billy Graham, is getting me fitter than ever for this. It's been weeks since I've had a drink with me Vikings.' Photograph: Andrew Varley

movie, the chant appropriated by supporters at the City Ground and Ewood Park when Lars Bohinen has

been British boxing's premier hands-

on ticket-seller.

But the mischief had turned to

mayhem earlier that evening in

September 1994 when Vikings from

Salford, a Manchester, United

stronghold, and the notorious "Zulu" Birmingham City supporters who followed Foster's opponent, Robert McCracken, clashed inside the National Exhibition Centre in one of the worst British boxing riots ever – though it was chicken feed

compared with July's Madison

Square Garden disturbance. "It

was terrible," Foster said. "Those

Zulus attacked us. We're never any

trouble. Me Vikings used to take

their wives and kids along, but they

stoned after that. It took four fights

before the Vikings felt safe in bringing the family again."

They will be there in force at the

Nyex Centre, Manchester, on 19

September. Only Odin knows what

Florida's Ronald "Winky" Wright,

the World Boxing Organisation

champion, will make of it all.

"And wait till he gets a load of me," Foster said. "I'll be in his face all night, Me trainer, Billy Graham, is getting me fitter than ever for this. It's been weeks since I've had a drink with me Vikings."

Unsurprisingly, Graham is nicknamed "The Preacher". But no, he does not inspire dog-collar-wearing support. One cult will do Salford nicely.

1 THE INDEPENDENT RACING

PLAY FORMULA 1 DREAM TEAM

WIN a drive in a grand prix car



Plus prizes to be won with every grand prix

Formula 1 Dream Team is just like Fantasy Football: you pick and manage your dream grand prix team to score points over the season.

Even though the grand prix season is underway, it is not too late to join in: pit your wits against other enthusiasts and you could win our prize for the Belgian Grand Prix. The champion of the 1996 grand prix season will win our overall prize, a drive in a Formula One car.

Your team must comprise three drivers, a chassis and an engine; your budget is £40 million. Make your selections from the grand prix shopping list (printed right); the only restriction is that your third driver must come from the £1 million category.

Details of how to enter are given on this page. Remember, there are prizes for the winning Dream Team in each individual grand prix so you can enter a different team for each race.

HOW YOU SCORE

Points are awarded per race to the top six finishers, based on the Formula One World Championship points scoring system (10, 6, 4, 3, 2, 1) but with an extra 10 points awarded to each of the top six finishers. All drivers are eligible to score for a top six finish but can also notch up extra points as follows:

● The fastest driver in race-day warm-up will collect six points, five for the second and so on down to one point for the sixth quickest.

● Drivers score one point for each place they make up over their grid position. Points are not deducted by losing places.

● Five points are lost if your driver posts first retirement, four for second down to one point lost for the fifth retirement.

● If your driver makes the quickest pit-stop (from the entry of the pitlane to the exit) you gain five points.

● If your driver sets the fastest lap time in the race, you gain five points.

● If your driver receives a stop/go penalty, you lose five points.

● If your driver starts on pole position, you gain five points.

● The Independent will name a Driver of the Day after each race for a particularly impressive performance, worth five points.

● Non-qualification for a grand prix loses you two points. If a driver is on the

FLA's published starting grid but fails to

take the start, no points are lost.

● Drivers removed from the results

for any reason lose all points gained that weekend. Any driver not competing in a grand prix weekend scores no points.

● Chassis score and loss points in the same way as drivers for a top six finish or any early retirement. The score

is based on the first chassis home of that particular manufacturer. Likewise, only the first chassis retirement will count if they are both among the first five to retire.

● Engine rules are the same as the chassis rules, without the retirement

penalties.

Method 1 uses a tone phone that lets you

key in the code numbers of your driver, chassis and engine choices. The computer will check that your team falls within budget and is eligible.

Method 2 uses a non-tone phone and you give your details verbally. A budget check is not possible using this method.

Give your team a name and register it by ringing 0891 891 895.

You will immediately be asked the entry question: How many races are there in this year's Formula One World Champion-

ship?

To enter your Dream Team details you can use one of two methods.

Method 1 uses a tone phone that lets you

key in the code numbers of your driver, chassis and engine choices. The computer will check that your team falls within budget and is eligible.

Method 2 uses a non-tone phone and you give your details verbally. A budget check is not possible using this method.

When you have registered your Dream Team, you will be asked to predict the number of points this year's champion will

notch up over the year. In case of a tie at the end of the season, the nearest figure to the champion's points will win the top prize. In the event of a further tie, the team that registered first will win.

For lost PIN numbers please call:

0891 891 808. For our Helpline call:

01275 344183.

10. The Top 50 Teams Line, lists the top 50 teams from the last race. Both the Team Position Check Line and the Results & Top 50 Teams Line will be updated at 2pm on the Monday following a race.

Shopping List

DRIVERS	CHASSIS
£25m	£20m
1 M Schumacher	40 Benetton
£23m	41 Williams
2 J Alesi	£18m
3 D Hill	42 Ferrari
£20m	£15m
4 G Berger	43 McLaren
£15m	£14m
5 D Coulthard	44 Sauber
6 E Irvine	45 Jordan
7 J Villeneuve	£13m
8 M Hakkinen	46 Ligier
9 H H Frentzen	£8m
£10m	47 Tyrrell
10 M Brundle	£8m
11 R Barrichello	48 Arrows
12 J Herbert	£6m
£6m	49 Minardi
13 M Saio	£1m
14 P Lamby	50 Ford
£4m	
15 P Diniz	
16 U Katayama	
17 J Verstappen	
18 O Panis	
£2m	
19 L Badoer	
20 R Rosset	
21 A Montermini	
£2m	
22 G Fisichella*	
23 V Sospiri*	
24 T Marques*	
25 F Lagorce*	
26 H Noda*	
27 T Inoue*	
£1m	
28 M Blundell*	
29 J-C Bouillon*	
30 K Brack*	
31 K Burt*	
32 E Collard*	
33 N Fontana*	
34 D Franchitti*	
35 N Larini*	
36 J Magnussen*	
37 A Frost*	
38 G Tarquini*	
39 K Wendlinger*	
£2m	
59 Ford Zetec V8	
£2m	
60 Ford ED V8	

1996 RACE SCHEDULE
Belgian GP
August 25
Italian GP
September 8
Portuguese GP
September 22
Japanese GP
October 13

*Not competing in Belgian GP but may compete later

Missing steaks, beer/whisky and wo/men

Report 1300 Tuesday

Last night was long and very tiring – at sunset we continued to battle it out with France II (Dominique Bourgeois), having spent all afternoon crossing within metres of each other. The night was pretty miserable for everyone in the rain... a measure of something, I guess. We made a big error by going too far north and ended up easing sheets to clear Dodman Point. The French followed us, and we both lost our "comfort zone" lead and as the sky cleared in the early hours we could see seven boats in the fleet and the race restarted. That's yachting, I guess!

We have been going to windward ever since, which is demotivating for us, as we can't get within 10 degrees of the heading of the other boats. Going through the straits between Land's End and the Isles of Scilly was a little tense, as we were losing ground rapidly, with the tide running against us. A lift at the last minute saved us, and we have since climbed away from the Scots (we think) to hold on to the second place, with the French not too far ahead. Now we are all sailing away from land (at last) towards the Fastnet. Our biggest problem is our inability to point and we are already a mile to leeward of the French. Conrad Humphreys (first mate) and I have tried everything to solve this, and have considered turning the genoa around as I am sure it would look better.

Mark Turner,
skipper of
England I,
reports on the criss-cross
chase of the
Round Britain
Challenge '96

knowing or understanding. None of us can understand the Irish, although we've tracked down their channel and the French obviously don't realise that we can understand them – very amusing listening to their chais!

A hundred and fifty slow

miles to go to the Fastnet. We are hoping desperately for a change of wind so we can stop using our genoa. We know we can go faster on other points of sail. The crew are talking of "all" the things they are missing and I have already heard steaks, beer/whisky and wo/men. Just like all other offshore races, then.

We have observed a new phenomenon on board: FOF – Fear of Failure – experienced by all Teacher's Challenge crew as all are so concerned not to let their team-mates down.

For Conrad and me, the last 24 hours have been pretty sleepless. With the competition between the five nations so close there has been a lot of adrenaline running and we have been having to support and teach the crew at the same time, which adds a new dimension to the sailing. The crew on board FOF of the Isle of Wight are a mixed lot from very different backgrounds. City finance managers are prone to certain injuries – soft hands and light spinner sheets are causing blister problems for Peter Taito.

We have a problem with the water which is causing a bit of a headache and we're having to boil our water. Not sure what is happening but it is out very clean.

One of the amusing parts of the Teacher's Challenge is the inter-team communication – each team has developed its own methods of trying to get a VHF link without others

knowing or understanding.

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England I, on course for the Fastnet
Photograph: James Wright/Double Red

Larder looks to Roper and Hunt

Rugby League

DAVE HADFIELD

ley club, who scored six tries against Widnes on Sunday to underline his claims.

James Lowes of the Bradford Bulls is the favourite to take over from Jackson as one of the party's two specialist hookers.

The Central leisure group, which narrowly failed to take over Leeds United recently, has switched its attention to the city's rugby league club.

The Wiggin pair of Jason Robinson and Gary Connolly, plus Lee Jackson, who is now with the Newcastle Knights in Australia, are all under contract to the Australian Rugby League, which says it will not allow them to play.

"We are realistic about the prospect of losing them," Larder said. "It was always a possibility after the ARL persuaded Gary to withdraw from the Fiji Nines. They have had large sums of money from the ARL, and do not want to run the risk of losing them."

Although the League here has made defiant noises about the ARL's tactics, the players themselves are already making their own arrangements, with Connolly and Robinson negotiating close-season contracts with rugby union clubs.

The Great Britain management will discuss the situation tomorrow, but Larder will not make any decision on replacements until after the last Super League match of the season, between St Helens and Warrington next Monday.

That will give two members of his shadow squad the chance to impress, as Saints' Alan Hunt and Warrington's Jonathan Roper are both expected to play.

Another candidate as a stand-in for Robinson is Jason Crichton, from Larder's Leigh

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THE INDEPENDENT INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

PHILIPS
Let's make things better

Play INDEPENDENT FANTASY FOOTBALL

You've seen the rest now play the best in The Independent and the Independent on Sunday. Independent Fantasy Football, supported by Philips Energy Saver Light Bulbs, brings you the first real innovation in fantasy football allowing you to pick the playing formation of your team. You can opt for a defensive strategy with five defenders, three midfielders and two strikers in a 5-3-2 formation, or go on the attack with three strikers in a 4-3-3 line-up. Complete your team with a goalkeeper and a Premiership manager and you'll be ready for kick-off. To put your title-winning team together you have a budget of £40 million to spend. It is up to you how you spend the money, with no restrictions on the number of players you can choose from any one Premiership team. Look carefully and you will find some real bargains, with Alan Shearer on sale for the fantasy price of £11.1 million!

So take up the challenge and prove your skill as a manager to win a football fan's dream prize and the opportunity to gloat over friends and colleagues well into the 1997-98 season.

PRIZES

The overall winner at the end of the season will be the entrant who has accrued more points than any other Independent Fantasy Football team in that time. Win the ultimate prize - a trip to the 1998 World Cup in France. The winner, plus companion, will see all the action of a quarter-final and a semi-final of their choice, plus the final. In addition, the highest scoring team each month will win a pair of tickets to one of England's World Cup qualifying games at Wembley.

HOW TO ENTER
Using your football knowledge decide your team formation from the following four options:

FORMATION A: 4-4-2
4 Defenders, 4 Midfielders, 2 Strikers
FORMATION B: 4-3-3
4 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 3 Strikers
FORMATION C: 5-3-2
5 Defenders, 3 Midfielders, 2 Strikers
FORMATION D: 3-5-2
3 Defenders, 5 Midfielders, 2 Strikers

You are free to enter as many teams as you wish, allowing you to try out more than one tactical formation, but each team must be made as a separate entry via a separate telephone call.

Once you have chosen your formation, select your team of 10 players to fit your chosen option, plus one goalkeeper and



one manager from the list below. Players can only play in the positions that they are listed under and the team's total value must not exceed £40 million. Remember to give your team a name. Use our Team Selection form above right, to make a note of your team's details, then dial our registration hotline to register. Where possible, please try to use a tone telephone, although a traditional pulse telephone can be used if necessary. Make sure you follow the instructions on the phoneline carefully. At the end of your call you will be given your own special PIN number, which you must keep safe. It can be added to your Team Selection form

HOW TO SCORE

Every time one of your players scores a goal you will be awarded four points. Four points will also be awarded for goalkeepers and defenders whose team have kept a clean sheet during a match. If a player scores the winning goal, i.e. if there is a one-goal difference in the scoreline, the player scoring the final goal for the winning team is awarded one bonus point in addition to the standard four points awarded for that goal. Each successful assist (a

pass that, in the opinion of our team of experts, leads directly to a goal) will give a player three points. The opinion of our experts on this matter is final. Each player selected and starting a game will be awarded one point.

Players lose one point for a yellow card and three for a red card. Own goals, either scored or conceded, do not count for scoring purposes.

The Premiership manager that you choose will be awarded three points if their real-life team win, one point if they draw and no points if they lose.

Results will be published in The Independent every Wednesday for all games played from the previous Monday to Sunday inclusive. They will also appear the following Sunday, in the Independent on Sunday.

If your player or manager has been injured or transferred out of the Premiership, there will be the chance to update your team in our transfer period, which will be announced soon. Please read the Rules and Conditions carefully before making your call.

Team Selection Form

	Name	Code	Value
Goalkeeper			
Defender 1			
Defender 2			
Defender 3			
Defender 4			
Defender 5			
Midfielder 1			
Midfielder 2			
Midfielder 3			
Midfielder 4			
Midfielder 5			
Striker 1			
Striker 2			
Striker 3			
Manager			
PIN No.	████████	Total £	

Team Name:

POINT SCORES:

4 points for a goal ■ 4 points for a goalkeeper/defender clean sheet ■ 3 points for a successful assist ■ 1 point when a player is selected and plays ■ 1 point for a winning goal ■ 3 points for a manager win, 1 point for a draw ■ Lose 1 point for a yellow card ■ Lose 3 points for a red card

Register today, call:

UK 0891-252-244 (tone)

UK 0891-252-234 (pulse)

Republic of Ireland: 1550 131 553

UK calls cost 39p per minute cheap rate and 49p at all other times. Republic of Ireland calls cost 58p per minute including VAT at all times. Maximum call length 6.5 minutes.

INDEPENDENT TEAM MARKET

CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE	(£m)	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE	(£m)	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE	(£m)	CODE	PLAYER	TEAM	VALUE	(£m)
GOALKEEPERS																			
300	Scaman	ARS	5.9	457	Watson	EVE	2.7	553	Reeves	WIM	1.8	687	Woon	NOT	3.4	856	Claridge	LEI	3.0
303	Bosnich	AV	4.0	458	Unsworth	EVE	3.0	554	Thorpe	WIM	1.8	688	Bart-Williams	NOT	3.6	857	Heskey	LEI	2.8
304	Flowers	BLA	5.2	463	Jobson	LEE	2.7	555	Thacker	WIM	2.7	689	Stone	NOT	5.0	858	Robins	LEI	2.0
305	Kharine	CHE	3.7	464	Hughton	EVE	2.2	600	Merson	ARS	4.4	690	Gommill	NOT	3.0	859	Cantona	MU	8.1
306	Hitchcock	CHE	1.5	465	Wetherall	LEE	3.5	601	Platt	ARS	4.8	693	Parker	LEI	2.5	860	Scholes	MU	5.0
307	Orzivovic	COV	2.2	466	Dorigo	LEE	3.2	602	Parfou	ARS	2.4	694	Taylor	LEI	1.6	863	Cole	MU	6.2
308	Filan	COV	1.5	467	Pemberton	LEE	1.2	603	Helder	ARS	3.7	695	Izzett	LEI	2.1	864	Ferguson	MID	3.1
309	Southall	EVE	3.0	468	Walsh	LEI	2.2	604	Parfou	ARS	1.5	696	Wardle	SW	2.7	865	Kavanagh	MID	8.0
310	Maryn	LEE	3.3	469	Grayson	LEE	2.2	605	Hodder	ARS	1.5	697	Blanks	SW	2.2	866	Barmby	MID	6.7
311	James	LIV	4.7	470	Whitlow	LEI	1.2	606	Hiller	ARS	1.5	698	Jones	SW	2.0	867	Beardsley	NEW	4.4
312	Poole	LEI	1.5	471	Watts	LEI	1.6	607	Taylor	AV	1.9	699	Hyde	SW	1.8	868	Asprilla	NEW	7.4
313	Hout	DER	1.6	472	Babb	LIV	3.7	608	Townsend	AV	3.1	700	Magilton	SOT	2.4	869	Ferninand	NEW	8.6
314	Schmeichel	MU	5.5	473	Jones	LIV	2.7	609	Dearden	AV	1.5	701	Venison	SOT	2.7	870	Saunders	NOT	5.2
315	Walsb	MID	3.0	474	Wright	LIV	2.8	610	Dearden	AV	1.5	702	Heaney	SOT	2.2	871	Ross	NOT	4.8
316	Smicer	NEW	3.7	475	Ruddock	LIV	3.0	611	Dearden	AV	1.5	703	Gray	SUN	3.0	872	Campbell	NOT	3.1
317	Hilson	NEW	3.7	476	Scalas	LIV	4.4	612	Dearden	AV	1.5	704	Gray	SUN	3.0	873	Booth	SW	4.4
318	Crossley	NOT	2.7	477	Harkness	LIV	2.2	613	Dearden	AV	1.5	705	McKenna	SW	2.0	874	Hirst	SW	5.5
319	Wright	NOT	1.3	478	Neville (G)	MU	3.7	614	Dearden	AV	1.5	706	Anderson	TOT	4.7	875	Bright	SW	2.5
320	Beasant	SOT	1.8	479	Neville (P)	MU	3.7	615	Dearden	AV	1.5	707	Anderson	TOT	4.7	876	Le Tissier	SOT	7.0
321	Preesman	SW	2.7	480	Palister	MU	4.1	616	Dearden	AV	1.5	708	Anderson	TOT	4.7	877	Shipperley	SOT	3.7
322	Coton	SUN	1.8	481	May	MU	3.0	617	Newton	CHE	2.4	709	Anderson	TOT	4.7	878	Watson	SOT	2.2
323	Walker	TOT	3.4	482	Vickers	MID	2.2	618	Peacock	CHE	2.1	710	Anderson	TOT	4.7	879	Kelly	SUN	2.1
324	Miklosko	WH	3.0	483	Pearson	MID	2.2	619	Salako	CHE	2.4	711	Anderson	TOT	4.7	880	Stewart	SUN	2.3
325	Sullivan	WIM	1.8	484	Whyte	MID	2.2	620	Jeffreys	CHE	1.8	712	Hughes	WH	2.7	881	Sheringham	TOT	7.4
326	Elighogu	AV	3.0	485	Cox	MID	2.5	621	McArdle	CHE	2.1	713	Moncur	WH	2.7	882	Armstrong	TOT	5.9
327	Tier	AV	3.4	486	Albert	NEW	4.1	622	McAllister	CHE	2.0	714	Bishop	WH	2.7	883	Rosenthal	TOT	2.1
328	Berg	BLA	3.4	487	Howey	NEW	3.7	623	McAllister	CHE	2.2	715	Jones	WH	2.3	884	Purie	WH	4.0
329	Le Saux	BLA	4.0</td																

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But, attractive though aspects of such a proposal sound, it runs second-best to the creation in Britain of what exists in the United States as in Germany – a senate or legislative council, elected and possessing a plenitude of power but distinct from the house of representatives or national assembly below it. Elected for longer terms,

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

No apology for a summer of research

Sir: Your leader ("Lessons of the scramble for university places", 19 August) proposes one explanation for current admissions procedures: "It looks as though the nation's academics are reluctant to give up their research, trips to foreign universities or just their month in the Dordogne for the sake of ... a post A-level admissions system that will secure fairness and peace of mind for thousands of young people." I would like to offer a different perspective.

Our universities are built on the twin pillars of teaching and research. The range of courses, quality of tuition and educational opportunities provided by research-led universities depend crucially on the quality and diversity of lecturers' research. A research community which is able to recruit and retain the best educators, to offer the most innovative courses of study, to forge links with sister institutions around the world and to attract the cream of visiting professors, provides an unrivalled learning environment. I am not embarrassed to refuse to "give up my research", partly because that would be tantamount to giving up on my students, too. Research is what I am paid (not much) to do.

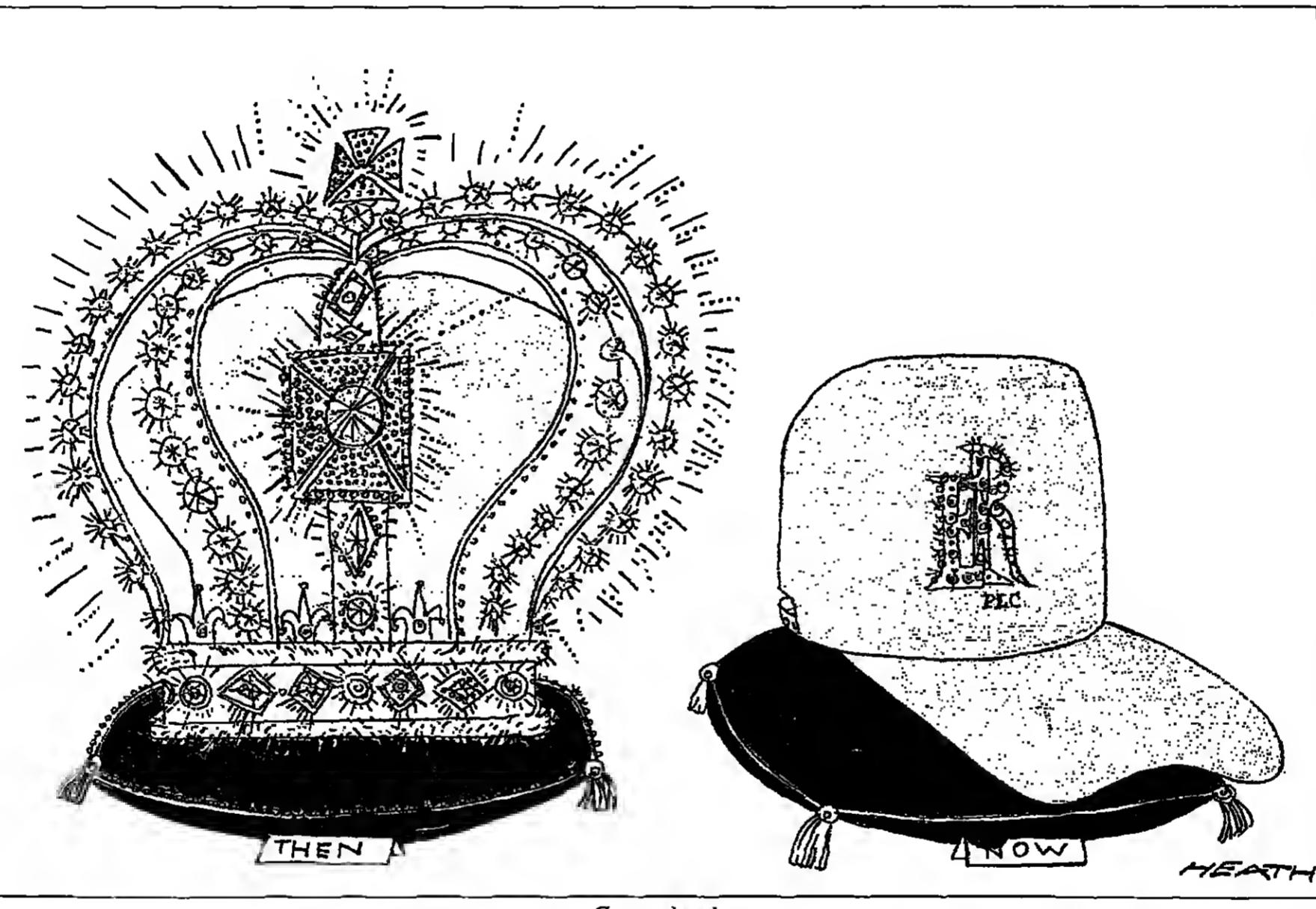
But my research is under threat. With deep cuts in government funding and declining staff-student ratios come extra teaching, extra exam setting and marking, additional pastoral responsibilities and more administration, to say nothing of our monstrously resource-intensive quality assessment procedures and the time and money we are now obliged to waste competing in the educational "marketplace".

Research gets squeezed out to evenings and weekends. The summer recess from the beginning of July, when examination boards are completed, to the start of September, when meetings resume, is now the only period in which conferences, networking with colleagues in institutions abroad and substantial research projects may be undertaken. A month in the Dordogne sounds very attractive, but I have only managed one 10-day summer holiday in the last three years.

PAUL ROBERTS
Law Department
University of Nottingham

Sir: It was sad to see such a superficial analysis of the university admissions process in your leader. Much as I sympathise with the 40,000 candidates at present entering the uncertainty of the clearing system, I cannot see that any procedure requiring 400,000 candidates to be assessed and offered university places within a period of six weeks in August and September will improve the situation and "secure fairness and peace of mind for thousands of young people".

For all its faults our present system does ensure that over 85 per cent of candidates secure a place in a university of their choice in good time to organise their finances and accommodation; it enables students with special needs and disabilities to be assessed sympathetically; it allows overseas students time to secure visas and funding; above all, it fits candidates to courses which will suit them, producing a university student population with the lowest drop-out rate of anywhere in the world, which is the envy of all our competitors.



Crown jewels

We would all welcome a post-qualification applications system and I only wish it was as easy to implement as you suggest. All we ask in Cambridge is that the process gives time to interview all our candidates and select carefully; over 90 per cent of all our candidates achieve at least three A grades at A-level, and assessment by A-level grades alone would be unacceptable both to the colleges and to most students and schools. Equally, medical schools and universities offering teacher training courses all require personal interviews.

We could, of course, go back to the post A-level system which Cambridge operated happily for many years. This, however, required all students to take a year off between school and university. Alternatively, we could look at introducing a four-term year into schools. This suggestion has been much welcomed by many educationalists and parents, and would enable the final year of examinations to be taken earlier in the year without a significant loss of teaching time.

Dr STEPHEN TAYLOR
Reading, Berkshire

Sir: I am puzzled by the enthusiasm

for post-A-level entry to university. There would be little advantage to students in terms of time saved during preparation for A-levels.

They would not indeed have to apply to universities, but they would still need to do the research about institutions and courses, go to open days and talk to lecturers in order to make an informed choice about where to apply when they receive their results.

Moreover, a considerable proportion of places would be filled before the A-level results came out.

More than 30 per cent of undergraduates are now mature students, most of whom do not take A-levels in the year of their application. To this group could be added applicants to Oxbridge, which would still continue to interview and make offers pre-A-level. It is clear that very soon pressure would build up, at least from the better candidates, to be made pre-A-level, informal offers by the institution of their choice.

This is not to say that the present system works well, but there is a simple alternative: encourage students to take a year out and apply post-A-level. Applicants would then have their A-level results, and their preparation for examinations need not be interrupted by research about degree courses. In my experience, students who have had a year out come to university with a more mature and focused attitude to study. In addition, they could use a year out to save some money so that they graduated encumbered with fewer debts.

Fr FRANCIS BROWN
Kingston upon Hull, Humbershire

Give time for abortion reform

Sir: Recent news stories – from the destruction of human embryos to the horrific examples of "selective termination" – have reinforced the widespread belief that our abortion law must be changed.

But the will of the majority, in the country and among MPs, will continue to thwart as long as

the pro-abortionists in Parliament are allowed to exercise an effective veto on all attempts at reform. The key is the shortage of parliamentary time, which enables any private member's Bill to be "talked out" by even a handful of opponents.

David Steel's Abortion Bill was able to succeed in 1987 only because the then Labour administration made government time available for its passage. For governments thereafter to claim that they have remained neutral on abortion because they have allowed free votes on the issue, while at the same time they have consistently refused to provide government time for Bills seeking to modify the Act, has been dishonourable and disingenuous.

Fr FRANCIS BROWN
Kingston upon Hull, Humbershire

A choice of identities

Sir: The Tories' huffing and puffing over what flags and symbols should or should not appear on the proposed identity card for British citizens ("UK flag rowhlocks ID card", 19 August) is what we have come to expect from them, rather than a simple solution.

As possession of the card is to be voluntary, presumably individuals will have to fill in an application form to acquire one. They could simply be asked to tick a box saying if they want the Union Flag depicted on it as well as the European Union symbol.

It would be hardly more complicated to let the Scots and Welsh have their own national flags on it if they want.

MARTYN LUMLEY
Walsall, West Midlands

Picking a chairman

Sir: Paul Donovan (article, 7 August) commented on the procedures used in the selection of Sir Frederick Crawford as chairman designate of the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

It is dismissive of Mr Donovan to state that "the Home Office boasted that the selection for this post was one of the first to be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life". Surely leadership in this area should be commended, not ridiculed.

As a result of the Nolan

recommendations, I was

appointed, in November 1995, as

the first independent

Commissioner for Public

Appointments

London SW1

Code of Practice's seven principles (which include appointment on merit, independent scrutiny and openness and transparency) to their appointments procedures for some time, well in advance of the July deadline.

Amongst other things Paul Donovan argued that the advertisement for the appointment which he was questioning, "was not widely published". The post was advertised in three newspapers and a firm of executive search consultants was also used. In addition, the list of volunteers held in the Public Appointments Unit was scrutinised. The result of these measures was a total of 124 candidates from whom Sir Frederick was chosen.

Sir LEONARD PEACH
Commissioner for Public
Appointments
London SW1

Irish minefield

Sir: I fully share your desire

leading article, 12 August 1 to see

Mr Major receive the reward that

Gladstone and Lloyd George

deserved for their efforts in Ireland.

The former saw the Whig and

Radical wings of his party,

including the dynamic Joseph

Chamberlain, defect to the Tories

in protest, leading to the effective

exclusion of the Liberals from

power for 20 years. The efforts of

the latter, that culminated in

partition, were a major

contributing factor to the Tories

eroding their support for him. Both

men thus faded from being major

political players.

STEPHEN MACE
Saxtons,
Kent

Heroes of the French beaches

Sir: Royan, the west coast of France. Last week I was on the beach with my eight-year-old son, Jack, building sand castles. He had been running back and forth to the sea for water with his bucket and suddenly he disappeared. Since our arrival on the beach, crowds had descended. My son became disorientated and got lost.

When he didn't come back I went to look for him in the water as Jack is a keen swimmer. Although only 15 minutes had ticked by I was chilled with fear while feeling like an idiot. How could I lose my son who was virtually under my feet? My French "towel neighbours" urged me to inform the *poste de secours* (help point) which I did. This service is staffed by young men and women in their early twenties. They are a real *Baywatch* team, energetic, professional, and tanned. I found one member on the beach, armed with a lifejacket and floats, and he immediately sprang into action on his walkie talkie. Within minutes a public announcement was made on the beach that Jack was missing. Jack heard his name and knew that help was coming. He was then not afraid to be led away by an official (in swimming gear) when he was found. I am very grateful to that team. I explained to Messrs *Baywatch* that no such service existed in the UK and they replied that only Australia, the US and France now had such a facility.

Following the tragic disappearance of the Loughlin children on a beach in Norfolk and knowing of other sorts of emergencies that can arise when hundreds or thousands of people get together isn't the UK found its own *Baywatch* teams?

LIZ LOUGHRAH
London SE24

Graveyard for Brent Spar

Sir: Your report (15 August) on disposal of the Brent Spar oil platform refers to the more quidnunc proposals offered in response to Shell's trawl of ideas. Did none of the contenders suggest the cheapest solution: deep ocean sinking? Now that the hysteria which greeted the suggestion when it was originally put forward has faded, we can take a more rational view.

The essential point which was not made at the time is that the Western Approaches if the North Atlantic are a graveyard of millions of tons of ships lost through natural and unnatural causes. During 1942/43 alone about 12 million tons of merchant vessels were sunk along with a considerable number of naval ships, U-boats and aircraft. As far as we can tell no one has suffered any subsequent harm, despite the fact that those ships carried practically every form of man-made substance and artefact.

Pull the plug, note the Navas readings, then forget it.

G A HENWOOD
Goring,
Oxfordshire

Absent savant

Sir: Week 3, Day 1 of the DIY University and still no mention of Michel Foucault. What's going on?

CHRIS MOORHOUSE
Sheffield

Post letters to Letters to the Editor, and include a daytime telephone number.
(Fax: 0171-293 2036; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk) Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

هذا من الأصل

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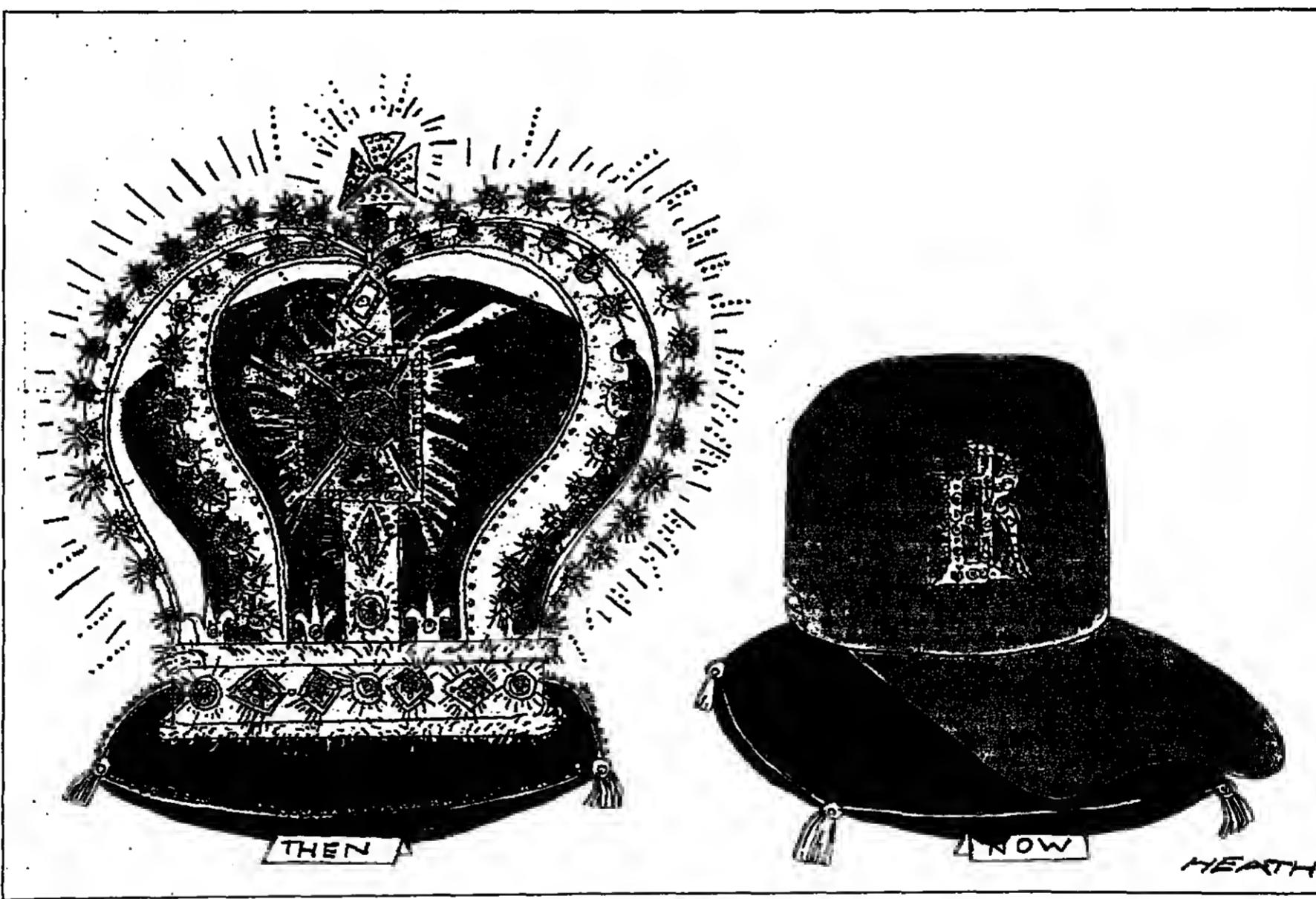
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Sir: I was sad to see such a superficial analysis of the university admissions process in your leader. Much as I sympathise with the 40,000 candidates at present entering the uncertainty of the clearing system, I cannot see that any procedure requiring 400,000 candidates to be assessed and offered university places within a period of six weeks in August and September will improve the situation and secure fairness and peace of mind for thousands of young people.

For all its faults our present system does ensure that over 85 per cent of candidates secure a place in a university of their choice in good time to organise their finances and accommodation; it enables students with special needs and disabilities to be assessed sympathetically; it allows overseas students time to secure visas and funding; above all, it fits candidates to courses which will suit them, producing a university student population with the lowest drop-out rate of anywhere in the world, which is the envy of all our competitors.



We would all welcome a post-qualification applications system and I only wish it was as easy to implement as you suggest. All we ask in Cambridge is that the process gives us time to interview all our candidates and select carefully; over 60 per cent of all our candidates achieve at least three A grades at A-level, and assessment by A-level grades alone would be unacceptable both to the colleges and to most students and schools. Equally, medical schools and universities offering teacher training courses all require personal interviews.

We could, of course, go back to the post A-level system which Cambridge operated happily for many years. This, however, required all students to take a year off between school and university. Alternatively, we could look at introducing a four-term year into schools. This suggestion has been much welcomed by many educationalists and parents, and would enable the final school examinations to be taken earlier in the year without a significant loss of teaching time.

DR STEPHEN TAYLOR
Reading, Berkshire

Sir: I am puzzled by the enthusiasm for post A-level entry to university. There would be little advantage to students in terms of time saved during preparation for A-levels. They would not indeed have to apply to universities, but they would still need to do the research about institutions and courses, go to open days and talk to lecturers in order to make an informed choice about where to apply when they receive their results.

Moreover, a considerable proportion of places would be filled before the A-level results came out.

More than 30 per cent of undergraduates are now mature students, most of whom do not take A-levels in the year of their application. To this group could be added applicants in Oxbridge, which would still continue to interview and make offers pre-A-level. It is clear that very soon pressure would build up, at least from the better candidates, to be made pre-A-level, informal offers of their choice.

This is not to say that the present system works well, but there is a simple alternative: encourage students to take a year out and apply post-A-level. Applicants would then have their A-level results, and their preparation for examinations need not be interrupted by research at degree courses. In my experience, students who have had a year out come to university with a more mature and focused attitude to study. In addition, they could use a year out to save some money so that they graduated encumbered with fewer debts.

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DR STEPHEN TAYLOR
Reading, Berkshire

Sir: Recent news stories – from the destruction of human embryos to the horrific examples of "selective termination" – have reinforced the widespread belief that our abortion law must be changed.

But the will of the majority, in the country and among MPs, will continue to be thwarted as long as

the pro-abortionists in Parliament are allowed to exercise an effective veto on all attempts at reform. The key is the shortage of parliamentary time, which enables any private member's Bill to be "talked out" by even a handful of opponents.

David Steel's Abortion Bill was able to succeed in 1967 only because the then Labour administration made government time available for its passage. For governments thereafter to claim that they have remained neutral on abortion because they have allowed free votes on the issue, while at the same time they have consistently refused to provide government time for Bills seeking to modify the Act, has been dishonourable and disgraceful.

FRANCIS BROWN
Kingston upon Hull, Humbershire

A choice of identities

Sir: The Tories' huffing and puffing over what flags and symbols should or should not appear on the proposed identity card for British citizens ("UK flag row blocks ID card", 19 August) is what we have come to expect from them, rather than a simple solution.

As possession of the card is to be voluntary, presumably individuals will have to fill in an application form to acquire one. They could simply be asked to tick a box saying if they want the Union Flag depicted on it as well as the European Union symbol.

It would be hardly more complicated to let the Scots and Welsh have their own national flags (if they want). MARTYN LUNDLEY
Wellasey, Wirral

Picking a chairman

Sir: Paul Donovan (article, 7 August) commented on the procedures used in the selection of Sir Frederick Crawford as chairman designate of the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

It is dismissive of Mr Donovan to state that "the Home Office boasted that the selecting for this post was one of the first to be carried out in accordance with the recommendations of the Nolan Committee on Standards in Public Life". Surely leadership in this area should be commended, not ridiculed.

As a result of the Nolan recommendations, I was appointed, in November 1995, as the first Independent Commissioner for Public Appointments to monitor, regulate and provide advice on departments' appointment procedures. I will also investigate written complaints about specific public appointments. In April this year I published a Code of Practice for Public Appointments.

Procedures and guidance for departments, both of which came into effect on 1 July, many departments, including the Home Office, have been applying the

Code of Practice's seven principles (which include appointment on merit, independent scrutiny and openness and transparency) to their appointments procedures for some time, well in advance of the July deadline.

Amongst other things Paul Donovan argued that the advertisement for the appointment which he was questioning, "was not widely published". The post was advertised in three newspapers and a firm of executive search consultants was also used. In addition, the list of volunteers held in the Public Appointments Unit was scrutinised. The result of these measures was a total of 124 candidates from whom Sir Frederick was chosen.

SIR LEONARD PEACH
Commissioner for Public Appointments
London SW1

Irish minefield

Sir: I fully share your desire (leading article, 12 August) to see Mr Major receive the reward that Gladstone and Lloyd George received for their efforts in Ireland.

The former saw the Whig and Radical wings of his party, including the dynamic Joseph Chamberlain, defect to the Tories in protest, leading to the effective exclusion of the Liberals from power for 20 years. The efforts of the latter, which culminated in partition, were a major contributing factor to the Tories ending their support for him. Both men thus faded from being major political players.

STEPHEN MACE
Severnsoaks, Kent

Heroes of the French beaches

Sir: Ryan, the west coast of France. Last week I was on the beach with my eight-year-old son, Jack, building sand castles. He had been running back and forth to the sea for water with his bucket and suddenly he disappeared. Since our arrival on the beach, crowds had descended. My son became disorientated and got lost.

When he didn't come back I went to look for him in the water as Jack is a keen swimmer. Although only 15 minutes had ticked by I was chilled with fear whilst feeling like an idiot. How could I lose my son who was virtually under my feet? My French "towel neighbours" urged me to inform the *poste de secours* (help point) which I did. This service is staffed by young men and women in their early twenties. They are a real *Baywatch* team, energetic, professional and tanned. I found one member on the beach, armed with a lifejacket and flippers, and he immediately sprang into action on his walkie-talkie. Within minutes a public announcement was made on the beach that Jack was missing. Jack heard his name and knew that help was coming. He was then not afraid to be led away by an official (in swimming gear) when he was found. I am very grateful to that team. I explained to Messrs *Baywatch* that no such service existed in the UK and they replied that only Australia, the US and France now had such a facility.

Following the tragic disappearance of the Loughlin children on a beach in Norfolk and knowing of other sorts of emergencies that can arise when hundreds or thousands of people get together isn't it time the UK found its own *Baywatch* teams? LIZ LOUGHREAN
London SE24

Graveyard for Brent Spar

Sir: Your report (15 August) on disposal of the Brent Spar oil platform refers to the more outlandish proposals offered in response to Shell's trawl of ideas. Did none of the contenders suggest the cheapest solution: deep ocean sinking? Now that the hysteria which greeted the suggestion when it was originally put forward has faded, we can take a more rational view.

The essential point which was not made at the time is that the Western Approaches of the North Atlantic are a graveyard of millions of tons of ships lost through natural and unnatural causes. During 1942/43 alone about 12 million tons of merchant vessels were sunk along with a considerable number of naval ships, U-boats and aircraft. As far as we can tell no one has suffered any subsequent harm, despite the fact that those ships carried practically every form of man-made substances and artefacts.

Pull the plug, note the Navsat readings, then forget it. G A HENWOOD
Goring, Oxfordshire

Absent savant

Sir: Week 3, Day 1 of the DIY University and still no mention of Michel Foucault. What's going on? CHRIS MOORHOUSE
Sheffield

analysis

Farewell to St Trinian's, goodbye to the GCSE

The English exam system has returned to its Eighties élitism. Now testing at 16 must stop, says Judith Judd

The General Certificate of Secondary Education is the exam that died. It died so quietly that nobody noticed. Its enemies moved in slowly, chipping away until they had finished it off and its supporters were too weary to resist. Around 600,000 students take it each year. They think the exam is still alive, but they are wrong. It is no longer the test they think it is and, for those at the bottom, it is a waste of time.

The story began in 1979 when Margaret Thatcher came to power and proposals were already in place from Shirley Williams, Labour's Secretary of State for Education, for a new common exam for all that would replace O-level and the Certificate of Secondary Education. Instinctively, the Conservatives were against it. They saw it as a plot by egalitarian teachers which would lower standards.

But the teachers persisted. They argued that the O-level, though valued by parents and employers, was a highly academic exam designed only for the top 25 per cent of the ability range. CSEs for pupils of average ability were fine except that no one, including employers, thought they were worth much. For the bottom 40 per cent of children, there was nothing at all. The talents of thousands of children were being wasted, teachers suggested, and the nation's economic prosperity was at stake.

Help came from an unexpected quarter. Sir Keith Joseph, then Secretary of State for Education, arch free marketeer, friend of Margaret Thatcher, was by nature an academic who liked to decide issues on their intellectual merit. Teachers persuaded him to back the GCSE. He demanded and received from civil servants and school inspectors assurances that bright chil-



Ties that bind: but schools are not serving children as well as they could. The exams they set are only valuable for the brightest

dren would still be stretched and that, in some subjects at least, the brightest would take separate papers.

Tory suspicions remained. George Walden, former Conservative education minister and backbencher MP, asked in the Commons in 1984 whether the new exam, combining O-levels and CSEs, involved "merging up or merging down". Perhaps only Sir Keith could have convinced them that it was not the latter. He was, after all, "one of us".

In 1988, the first candidates sat the new exam. While ministers insisted that the standards of the old O-level would be maintained, the exam itself was very different. In most subjects, course work – done in

class or at home and marked by pupils' own teachers – accounted for at least 25 per cent of the marks and in some subjects all the marks. Teachers said that this was a much fairer way of testing children's ability and motivation. Those who did well in short final exams might not necessarily do as well if they had to sustain the performance throughout a two-year course.

There were other differences too. In maths, modern languages and some science syllabuses, there were extra papers for the brightest children. In most subjects there were not. There were common papers and students' performance was to be determined by their answers rather than the questions. Wherever possible,

teachers were determined to avoid dividing pupils into sheep and goats before they started their examination courses as they had done for O-level and CSE. That, they said, would limit ambition and aspiration. The public and employers had discounted those who took CSE. Teachers wanted all GCSE candidates to have the same chance.

Even before the first results were published, the exam came under attack from the right-wing media and Conservative MPs. Course work was seen as a cheats' charter. How could they know that all teachers were operating the same standards? Sir Rhodes Boyson, Conservative MP and former education minister, later remarked that GCSE marks were improving because the whole family now sat round the table and did the exam.

The common papers were also a target. Because they were taken by pupils of a very wide range of ability, the first few questions were often very easy. Newspapers mocked them.

When the first set of results came out in 1988, a higher proportion of children were getting grades A–C, the equivalent of the old O-level grades. Year by year, the improvement in

results continued and so did the warfare between the teachers and backbench Conservatives. The former argued that the better results were due to increased motivation and harder work because more pupils were worried about getting jobs. The latter said the exam and its marking were getting easier. They spoke of reports of pupils from fee-paying schools getting strings of A's

papers so that in a vast majority of subjects there would be levels for able and less able children. In some subjects, there would be three tiers – for the brightest, average and below-average children. Teachers would have to decide which her level of difficulty children should take and exactly the same way as they had decided who should take O-level and CSE. In some subjects, the decision

enough pressure, they said. They spoke of weeping pupils, distressed that they had scored "only" A.

And if we were going to start picking out groups of children, why not pick out the ones at the bottom who needed special help. How about a starred G or a starred F? High-fliers, after all, had always done well in the English education system. Yet every international study showed that it was the children at the bottom of the heap which English schools failed.

The reinvention of O-level proceeded apace, helped by the Government's performance tables of exams. These recorded school GCSE scores at all grades but the only ones that counted for most newspapers were the proportion awarded grades A–C. Employers, too, were sceptical about any grade below C.

It was true that a higher proportion of children received top grades than in O-level days, but pupils who were entered for the lower tiers would not be eligible for the higher grades whatever their performance in the exams.

Ministers were in a dilemma. They were desperate not to appear soft on standards but they could not abolish an exam that they had themselves so recently created. And to knock the achievements of 16-year-olds was politically crazy.

But step by step, they began to dismantle the exam. In 1992, John Major announced that course work would be drastically reduced: in no subject would it account for all the marks and in most it would be only 20 per cent.

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the commentators

Roses round the door – and blood on the doorstep

For more than 10 years, I lived in a magical house within walking distance of central London. It had eight bedrooms, huge, high-ceilinged reception rooms, a spiral staircase, stained glass windows, a modern kitchen and a wonderful, enclosed garden with an Albertine rose climbing 30 feet up an old brick wall. We had freehold rights to it, and it did not cost us a penny.

It was an Anglican vicarage located in the poorest ward of the poorest borough in Britain. Around this rather wonderful example of Victorian Gothic fantasy was a wasteland of council housing, a community which was disintegrating, wracked with crime, unemployment, poverty, alienation, and alcohol and drug abuse. There was a level of casual violence here that nothing had prepared me for. My husband, the vicar, woot ooe day to make a visit related to a baptism and noticed a sown-off shotgun lying on the table. The baby's mother told her man to put it away "because the vicar is here", so he pushed it under the sofa.

Clergy sent to run-down city centres are unprepared for the risks they and their families run

We laughed. We went on laughing, in fact, for most of the time we lived there; there is not much else you can do, and anyway I loved it. It is only now, afterwards, living in the country and reading about Christopher Gray and Anthony Couchman, inner-city clergy killed and wounded on the job, that I realise how frightened I ought to have been. For the vicar, for the children and for myself.

I got shot at once as a matter of fact, with a .22 rifle, through the window of my study. That was scary, but it was also arbitrary and pointless – the assailant was drug-freaked, and certainly without any personal malice. More frightening was the experience of coming home to find a great deal of blood all over the front door steps, apparently flowing from under the door. It was not, in fact: there had been a knife fight on the doorstep. Or the time when it transpired, following a minor burglary, that both the children individually had encountered the thief on the

stairs, and said polite hellos to him: they were so used to strangers. (An interesting side-effect of their immersion in the local community was that when the police asked them to describe the intruder they both knew what he was wearing in some detail, but neither had noticed whether he was black or white.)

We went on believing in an "open house" policy, but over the years we became more cautious – or less committed; more aware – or less holy. Gradually we acquired basic precautions: a chain on the door, an insistence that the children use it, a burglar alarm, spikes on the garden wall, window grilles; though often it was one "insurer's" growing reluctance, rather than our good sense, that dictated these developments. And none of these things would have protected anyone from the panicked ring on the bell at night; from the disconcerting realisation that the person you are giving a cup of tea to is simply insane; from the very angry, or the totally desperate.



SARA MAITLAND

We would have gone there anyway, I think, even if we had been better prepared. But the lack of warning and support seems, retrospectively, terrifying. The training my husband went through did not include self-preservation. We needed teaching, not just about physical danger but also about more delicate issues. No one ever spoke about what it means for children to go to a primary school in which they would be the only child in socio-economic groups A/B/C/D. When I asked my 15-year-old what was the best thing about his father not being

a vicar any more, he said, "not being the vicar's kid in school".

The gentlemanly liberalism of the Church of England does not like to talk about class: but it matters. Our children were torn apart by divergent standards. We were once called to my daughter's secondary school by a perplexed headteacher, who had threatened all sorts of extreme horrors in punishment for some minor infringement; and then demanded that the perpetrators "own up". Middle-class ethics dictated that my daughter publicly confess, but refuse to name other names. The head said that no one had ever owned up like that, and she had committed herself to such severity only as a way of making clear to the undetectable offenders the seriousness of the offence.

Less amusingly, a primary school teacher once told us self-righteously: "I did not come to the East End to teach children like yours."

Not many clergy have a background that truly enables them to

realise what they are going to. Inner-city ministry carries kudos; it is also a recognised step on the ladder of promotion. The unfortunate sentimentality about "front-line heroes" does not help. There is a further problem with training clergy: although they acquire very few useful survival skills, they tend to acquire considerable arrogance; a failure to know what they do not know, and therefore to know when to seek help. No one, without proper psychiatric training, and within a private institution, should be "counseling" anyone at 1.30am, protecting, talking to, seeking support for, calming down, perhaps – but counselling...

In any case, there really is no choice about being there: if the clergy believe they are there to embody Christ, then they will just have to push on with open-door, all-hour, on-the-spot, high-contact, risky ministry. After all, He did.

I do not regret any of it. I miss it sometimes. I learned a lot. It was

worth the risk – it was even worth the risk to the children. The roses were so beautiful, and the good bits – the warmth, the affection, even some of the high expectations and unearned respect – were very good indeed. After all, you can get killed and raped and maimed almost anywhere, but spinal fractures are hard to come by.

I could not help but notice that the Bishop of Barking, chair of a bishops' advisory group on urban priorities areas, said that there was a "danger" that there might come a time when priests would have to leave the inner cities. That is the point of divergence: they can leave; the other victims of the violence bred of deprivation cannot. It is tragic when a priest is killed or maimed, but only because it is tragic that anyone is so killed or maimed. If the Church of England – or any other Christian group – wants to protect clergy from these dangers, it should be more seriously engaged in ending endemic slum poverty in our inner cities, not in thinking about how to get out.

Curtain's up at the bawdy Globe

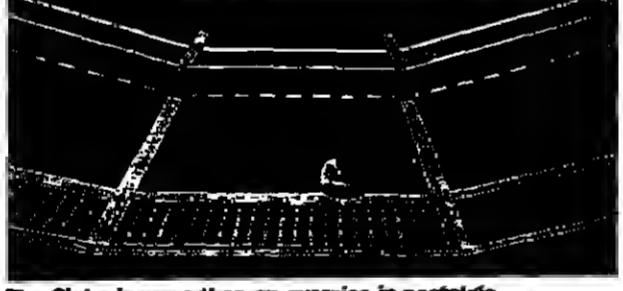
Robert Winder celebrates the return of Shakespeare's Wooden O

Shakespeare's Globe reopens for business today, just 383 years after the original playhouse burnt down (when a cannon set fire to the thatch during a performance of *Henry VIII*). It ought to be an occasion for some straightforward celebrating – a few firework displays and a few words – but these days our responses tend to be sour and a little suspicious. Fears have been expressed that the new Globe will be little more than a mock-Elizabethan theme park: Stratford-upon-Thames, or *Cany on up the King*. Indeed, it is hard not to tremble at the thought of all that yes-my-egger, all those buson wendes in period bodices clutching baskeis full of capons and flagons of rhenish, all those ghostrly cod-piece jokes for the tourists.

Actually, we probably shouldn't complain if these fears turn out to be well-founded. Even in Shakespeare's day the Globe was part of a south-of-the-river leisure complex, a 16th-century Disneyland where people went brothelling before the bear-baiting. Any historical enterprise is bound to risk seeming like an exercise in the most cartoonish sort of nostalgia. But the signs are that the Globe will not necessarily turn out like that. The artistic director, Mark Rylance, is a formidable and not remotely old-fashioned actor whose declared belief that Shakespeare was not actually the author of "the Shakespeare plays" is, however dotty, a useful sign that he does not regard the man as a sacred cow.

And the fact that he has chosen to open the new space with a performance of *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* – one of the most ham-fisted and least popular plays in the Collected Works – suggests that he will not be content simply to turn

out decorous productions of the old favourites. There are, to be sure, moments in the *Two Gentlemen* that sound like nothing so much as a parody of Shakespeare ("I am but a fool, look you, and yet I have the wit of a knave; but that's all ooe. If he be but one knave" etc etc). But the play is also full of asides and soliloquies that will sit much more comfortably in the uncontrolled platform space that they do in a modern theatre. There, as it were, is the rub.

The Globe is more than an exercise in nostalgia

The desire to see Shakespeare's plays in their original setting is no more draft or reactionary than the desire to listen to classical music on authentic instruments. Indeed, it is possible that there would be more excitement over the reopening if it truly were an exhaustive, scholarly inquiry into the nature of the Shakespearean stage.

Even as it is, the character of the new-old theatre should refresh, rather than costume dramatise, our idea of what Shakespeare wrote. He was, after all, a playwright who

apologise for the lousy special-effects: "Can this cockpit hold the vasty fields of France? Or may we crain within this wooden O the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt?"

That was a nice joke, but in the centuries that followed the theatre world was invaded by a drive towards naturalism from which we have only recently recovered. Now that cinema and television have trounced the stage's ability to create believable sets, it is safe to revert to an undecorated, imaginary space – a playground for plays. The audience will be close to the actors; it will be able to hear and relish the words. So it is not so much that the space should suit the plays, that sitting in an Elizabethan setting should enhance our appreciation of the drama (though it might – there's nothing like a Greek amphitheatre for Greek tragedy), but that the plays should suit the space.

An exercise in nostalgia that wanted to go the whole hog would have to employ boy actors to play women, and speculate about Elizabethan pronunciation; both of which would seem like phoney postures. Nor is the Globe a precise reproduction. At one point it was discovered that the thick wooden pillars holding up the roof of the stage would block the sightlines from the audience, so they were replaced by inauthentic slender models. These may yet turn out to be a great loss. In Shakespeare's day, they were no doubt useful places for the actors to hide – perhaps Polonius was ducking behind one when he was stabbed through the arms by Hamlet, but they are trifles, e'en so.

The one significant period detail that might have been overlooked concerns the taking of drink. The Globe, like the other theatres of the day, was based on the architecture of an

ino: a central yard surrounded by balconies. Boozing was an important part of the experience, both for the groundlings promenaders and for the sociables in the upper tiers. It was alcohol, as it happened, that saved the life of one plucky man caught in the fire that blitzed the original Globe.

"Nothing did perish but wood and straw," Sir Henry Wotton wrote to his nephew three days after the blaze. "Only one man had his breeches set on fire, that would perhaps have broiled him, if he had not by the benefit of a provident wit put it out with bottled ale."

There will, no doubt, be a certain amount of cod-Shakespearean waffle in the sandwich bars and cafes that will (it is hoped) spring up on Bankside. Theatregoers can look forward to their Falstaff haps and Macbeth Special brew. But that need not prevent the theatre itself from staging vibrant productions of the plays, in which we can just as scars that never felt a wound.

THE CENTRAL FACTS FROM THE COURSES YOU ALWAYS MEANT TO TAKE, IN 25 LECTURES



WEEK 3 DAY 3
Language
VISITING LECTURER: David Bodanis

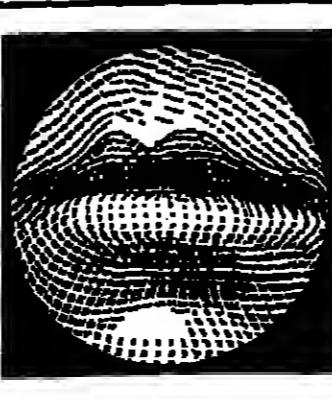
A final examination will be set at the end of term.
All graduates will be awarded a diploma and the ten best results will receive a year's subscription to the Independent

them. All they really hear are fragments: "Do this", "Try that", "Please don't dangle Mommy's computer outside the window again." Yet with the exception of some future professional football players, they all end up speaking the full language, pretty much.

The reason is that the sound fragments don't just fall into a void. Many of the words the adults say, those anxious discussions about where exactly to buy this thing called "pastrami", will still stir past, unable to be recognised. But a few of the words are collected, slipping easily into an amazing contraption we walk around with, loaded inside our head.

A child's brain seems pre-arranged to start re-arranging these first collected words, and send them back out as speech. But how can it possibly know which system of rearrangement will be best? This is where the parents' feedback comes in. A child in the French house will have heard hundreds of French phrases, and in most of them, whenever an adjective noun mix could be identified, the adjective was after the noun. The child will naturally try saying "rouge after pyjamas" when it points to a tattered red thing it's insisting on wearing again. An English immersed child will do the reverse.

If either of them gets it wrong, the parents might offer



a correction, but that's rarely necessary. Children are incredibly good at clicking the waiting brain switches into place – by the age of three their success rate is rarely under 93 per cent – and once the full panoply of adult switch-settings lock in, even greater feats can be performed. There are probably over 8,000 sentences in today's paper, and even ones you've never read before, does that engage in cheap tricks such as referring back to Mel's quest for the pastrami-hungry.

"Superman don't need no seat-helt". (To which she famously replied, reaching forward to buckle him anyway, "Sure, honey chile, but Superman don't need no airplane.") Transferred into French though the oegative would be perfectly allowable, simply being the *ne ... pas* construction.

Philosophers had long argued about innate ideas, but the details of this waiting switch system was only first brought out by Noam Chomsky, starting in the 1950s. It made him a star. The old-style lab psychologists, with their simple rat-and-maze models of behaviour, were wiped from the field. (How could they possibly encompass subjects able to generate an infinite number of fresh sentences?)

Sociolinguists loved the enhanced view of human motivation. When women spontaneously tell stories about themselves, for example, they often describe group action as

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obituaries/gazette

Mervyn Cowie

The great task of Mervyn Cowie's life was the pioneering of wildlife protection and the development of tourism throughout East Africa.

Cowie was one of only a few who had the vision to realise that the animals' saviour was going to be the tourist. Only tourism could attract the sort of revenues needed to establish parks and all the elaborate infrastructure necessary to make them a success. Many millions would be required – but even more millions would be earned, virtually all of it in foreign currency.

Cowie was born in British East Africa in 1909, his father having resigned as Chief Magistrate of Johannesburg in order to settle in Kenya. His mother was the archetypal colonial wife: dauntless, indomitable, fiercely determined in the overcoming of every obstacle and difficulty of living in raw Africa and raising two sons.

Cowie loved to narrate the tale of his parents' entertaining some important government guests to dinner. The meal was to begin with soup and *croissant*, all carefully prepared under the supervision of his mother. When the soup arrived it was almost consommé-like and devoid of any *croissant*. After the guests had gone Mishi, the cook, was asked why he had removed the *croissant* to which he replied that *memsahib* had left all these things floating in the bowl and he thought they should not be there. She enquired as to how they had been removed and was informed that one of *bwana*'s socks had made an excellent sieve; then, seeing the look of horror on her face, he hastily added that she need not worry, it was not a clean one!

Cowie was educated initially in Nairobi before going "home" (as Britain was referred to by the colonials) to study at Brighton College and Oxford. He returned to Kenya in 1932 after qualifying as a chartered accountant. Almost immediately he became alarmed by the very obvious depletion of wildlife since his departure, which was the result principally of a total lack of any governmental policies on conservation.

Between 1932 and the start of the Second World War Cowie served as a district councillor in Nairobi, trained with the King's African Rifles as a reserve, and above all, campaigned tirelessly and with missionary zeal towards his great vision of a series of National Parks and an

efficiently run system for game conservation.

Frustrated by unshakeable government lethargy, he embarked upon a ploy of anonymously advocating, via the press, a policy for the destruction of all wildlife in East Africa with a view to enhancing agriculture. His ruse worked: the government was so startled by public reaction to such an outrageous suggestion it was forced to do something. This consisted simply of forming a committee to examine the matter, but a start had been made.

Nairobi Park, the first in Kenya, was opened in 1946, with Cowie as Executive Director. Gradually he opened a whole series of parks throughout East Africa, later to be exalted to the

A black and white portrait of Mervyn Cowie, a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a suit and tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera.
Cowie: Kenyan wildlife protection

title of Royal National Parks. These included the famous Tree-Tops, where Princess Elizabeth and Prince Philip were staying in 1952 when she learnt of her accession to the throne. Cowie was tasked with protecting the royal party from wild animals during their stay. There was a bull elephant lurking in the trees nearby and the problem was how to shoo him away. Ever resourceful, Cowie, who could charm birds from the trees, found the solution. Approaching the bull carefully, keeping out of sight and downwind, he selected a large pebble, rubbed it vigorously under his armpit and then hurled it past the animal and upwind of it. Hearing the thud as the stone dropped, the elephant turned in that direction, picked up Cowie's aroma and immediately charged, happily in the desired direction.

Despite his tireless and often lonely and frustrating efforts to further the animals' interests, Cowie nevertheless found time to assist and advise on the forming of similar parks in Uganda and Tanganyika, to sit

on the Kenya Legislative Council (as his father had done) for 10 years, to run the demanding office of Director of Manpower during the Mau-Mau emergency in 1953, to co-found the Kenya Wildlife Society, act as East African representative for the Alliance Internationale de Tourisme, organise and manage extensive anti-poaching operations and of course travel extensively world-wide.

Cowie published three books on his life's burning passion, *Fly Vultures* (1961), *I Walk with Lions* (1964), and *African Lion* (1965). The popular film, *Where No Vultures Fly* (1951), was a dramatised story of his work.

Not shown in that film was a curious adventure which befell him once whilst visiting one of his park out-stations in a light aircraft. Landing on a rough and dusty strip cut from the surrounding bush, Cowie, as he slowed to a halt, was horrified to see a rhino charging straight towards him. Then followed a pure Keystone Kops sequence as he was chased in his aeroplane by the rhino, twisting and turning desperately as he tried to dodge the creature whilst endeavouring to get to the end of the strip so that he could take off again.

In 1963 Kenya became independent, three years later Cowie resigned from the Parks. By 1970 he was established as a Senior Consultant to the World Wildlife Fund, spending much of his time in London, where he was particularly involved with fund-raising. He found that to be disagreeable and in 1972 he joined the African Medical and Research Foundation Nairobi, the flying doctor service, as their financial director, a post which he held for seven years.

In time Kikemi, the house which Cowie's father had built in 1926, was sold, and he and his second wife Val returned to Britain. His latter days were much devoted to the writing of his last book which, sadly, he did not live to see published.

Francis Chamberlain

Mervyn Hugh Cowie, conservationist; born Nairobi, Kenya 13 April 1909; Founder and Director, Royal National Parks of Kenya 1946-66; Vice-President, East African Tourist Travel Association 1950-65; CBE 1966; married 1934 Moly Beatty (died 1956; two sons, one daughter), 1957 Valori Hare Duke (one son, one daughter); died 19 July 1996.

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Dr Zoheir Khayat

In Greek legend Sisyphus was condemned forever to push a great rock up a hill. Each time he reached the top it fell back again to the bottom. This was the story of Dr Zoheir Khayat. Three times he built up a splendid medical practice; each time it was overcome by revolution.

He was an extraordinary doctor who, from the mid-1950s, was driven from one Middle Eastern country to another, and ended up ministering to the sick in Beirut throughout the civil war at the cost of all his possessions and great personal danger.

His father had left Aleppo in Syria in 1897 in search of adventure and trade, taking the well-known silk route down to the Red Sea. He found a great deal of both in the Sudan. There he survived persecution by the Muslim leader, the Mahdi, but succeeded in becoming his advisor, briefly settling there long enough to meet Zoheir's mother Nozha, a woman of Turkish and Assyrian descent whom he married in 1909.

Zoheir, who was one of seven sons, was born in Omdurman in 1911. The family moved up to Cairo, where Zoheir was educated as a Roman Catholic. In 1931, accompanied by his twin brother, Sabry, Zoheir left Cairo for France to read Medicine. The completion of his degree and thesis kept him busy in Paris and Montpellier until 1938, when he returned to Egypt to settle with his family and begin building up a private practice. In 1948, following a chance encounter, he met Clare Cassab, and they married shortly afterwards, a day after his birthday, on 1 August 1948.

By the age of 45, in Cairo, Zoheir Khayat had had a happy family and an enviable first-class practice among the elite of the old Establishment and the Court itself. The advent of Nasser in the early 1950s put an

end to all his ambitions. He faced threats to his property, his religion and his liberty. Nasser's new regime hit the Christian and Jewish communities hard. Khayat's position as physician to King Farouk and the Jewish community made him particularly vulnerable.

In September 1961, fearing for his family's safety and his children's future, he drove them across the Western Desert and over the Libyan border. There he once again established himself as a leader of his profession, as physician to King Idris and his family.

After five years he felt again the rumblings of revolution. Following several humiliating experiences in the hands of the increasingly influential revolutionary factions of the army, he decided to abandon his career in Libya. His two sons, Georges and Antoine, were already at school in Switzerland, and he and Claire followed them there. But he needed a Swiss Diploma of Medicine to be allowed to practice.

As a result of a family friendship with the British Ambassador in Benghazi, the boys moved to a new school in England, Ratcliffe College in Leicester. Then, thanks to a chance encounter at his sons' school, Khayat was persuaded by a fellow parent on the Board of the Save the Children Fund to go to Algeria and head a medical mission to care for some 30,000 tuberculosis victims, east of Loughouat, some 450 km south of Algiers. After 18 months he badly damaged his back moving equipment and was no longer able to carry on.

He and his wife decided to go to Beirut, at that stage the most civilised, the most prosperous and by far the most pleasant city in the Levant. There for the next 10 years Khayat once again created a successful practice. But underneath the prosperity

of Beirut, the conflict between different races, different cultures and different religions was gradually increasing. In 1975 it exploded into open and violent civil war.

Khayat felt it was his duty to remain in Beirut where the need for him was greatest. Each year he and his wife would travel to England for a brief holiday. Each year against all persuasion from their friends they would return to his patients, to their shattered flat, the shelling and the bloody fighting in the streets. They faced this life of sacrifice in the belief that their friends, neighbours and patients needed his skills as a physician to surmount the trials and atrocities of such a brutal and cruel civil war.

Finally, some 10 years ago, when Khayat had reached the age of 77, they came back to London. Separation from their two sons had in no way weakened but rather strengthened family ties, while adding to parental pride was the sons' success – Georges as a doctor, and Antoine in banking and finance.

Ivor J. Crosthwaite

Zoheir Georges Khayat, physician; born Omdurman, Sudan 31 July 1911; married 1948 Clare Cassab (two sons); died Ipswich, Suffolk 22 July 1996.

A black and white portrait of Zoheir Georges Khayat, a man with dark hair and a beard, wearing a suit and tie. He is looking slightly to the right of the camera.
Khayat: doctor to kings

Rabbi Hugo Gryn had the gift of humorous encapsulation, something which could be very funny indeed while carrying a little reminder of the valley of the shadow through which he had walked, writes Edward Pearce

[further to the obituary by Albert H. Friedlander on 20 August].

He would tell the story of the

chicken and the pig who es-

caped from a farm in the west-

ern Ukraine. They came to a vil-

lage struck by famine. "Listen"

said the chicken (most of

Hugo's stories had someone

saying "Listen").

"Listen. Between us we could

keep these people in ham and

eggs for a week."

"Be quiet will you?" said the

pig. "For you that would be the

big gesture. For me it would be

a total sacrifice."

No one who worked with Hugo will forget the jokes, the hospitality and the generosity of spirit. He seemed in religion to be pre-eminently liberal, outgoing and inclusive asking non-religious Jews only to touch base without inquisition as to faith.

He was particularly fond of

a circle of Anglican, Catholic,

non-Conformist, and charac-

teristically, Muslim friends.

He had spent time in Scotland as a young man and said that on entering Cambridge he was asked where he came from; he replied in a Glasgow accent "Czechoslovakia".

As a young rabbi he was seized upon in Scotland by a community of Free Presbyterians who detained him for a week, delighted to entertain a rabbi and have their biblical He-

brew improved from the horse's mouth. But Hugo was that sort of horse.

Touched at different points in his life by Czechoslovakia, Scotland, Cambridge, the American south, India, metropolitan London and the Auschwitz which he remembered every day of his life, he was a dear and delightful man whom no one having known will ever forget.

Lectures

National Gallery: Jacqueline Lewis, "Horses (ii): Van Dyck, Equestrian Portrait of Charles I", 1pm.
National Portrait Gallery (guided tour): "The Performing Arts: portraits of actors and musicians 1500-1837", 2.30pm.

Changing of the Guard
The Household Cavalry Mounted Regiment: the Queen's Life Guard at Horse Guards, 11am.



A perfectionist who required anything out of tune to be done again and again: a painting by Nicholson of Etkan Annalidh, 1996

Jim Nicholson

The National Trust for Scotland, during a time of burgeoning expansion in the 1960s and 1970s, was fortunate in bringing together a number of very different, but idealistic men and women, devoted not only to the built heritage of Scotland but to landscape and countryside. Prominent among them was Jim Nicholson, the trust's first Art Designer, for whom the post of Art Director was later specially created.

Nicholson was in his own right a landscape painter of distinction. This year's National Trust for Scotland Edinburgh Festival exhibition contains some of Nicholson's pictures. His watercolours in particular of the St Kilda archipelago to which he devoted so much of his energy and Inverewe Gardens, a National Trust property on the west coast, are quite simply beautiful.

The National Trust for Scotland was founded in 1931, 35 years after its English counterpart. Besides managing 18 major houses, it is the fourth largest landowner – after the Forestry Commission, the Duke of Buccleuch and the Scottish Office – in Scotland. Nicholson was responsible for the production of all its booklets, guidebooks, publicity leaflets and advertising.

Sir Jamie Stannett Darling, the trust's long-term Director, describes Nicholson as "the best art director the National Trust for Scotland could ever have found – not only in his own work, but in his leadership and guidance of his team, which became of his excellence expanded to six. The whole standard of National Trust productions and publications rose to great heights under him."

"He got the best out of people," said Mrs Vivien Bremer, a member of his staff. At the same time he was a perfectionist and anything that was simply out of tune would be required to be done and quite often done again.

Jim Nicholson was born in Orley, Yorkshire, where his father was branch manager of a bank and his mother, a Graham, was of Scottish descent. After attending Prince Henry's Grammar School in Orley, he suc-

cumbed to parental pressure to go into the bank – and loathed it. At 17 in 1941, he was almost thankful to be called up and trained to become a pilot officer in Bomber Command.

As a 20-year-old, he was in a Lancaster Bomber as radio operator over Dresden. My first serious conversation with him was shortly after he had joined the National Trust staff, about St Valentine's Day 1965. After we had done our business, prompted by the fact that I was a young MP and German rearmament was one of the great concerns of the day for my party, out of the blue Nicholson said: "20 years ago last night, I was bombing Dresden."

For a man who loved beautiful things, of course, the destruction of the Baroque city and the Frauenkirche was a catastrophe. But what really moved him was the massive daughter – and not only of German civilians. He told me that he felt guilty – irrational though it may have been – that so many of his contemporaries in bomber crews, lads little different from him, would never return home. Later, he thought the denigration in some quarters of "Bomber" Harris was uncalled for, but that the real lesson was for political leaders to avoid war in the first place – "because not only nuclear weapons but all modern war can be utterly dreadful".

The experience of Dresden gave him, though he would have been too embarrassed to make a point of it, other than in private conversation, a desire for service to other people.

In 1945, he returned to the bank and attended evening classes at Leeds School of Art. Soon he realised that banking was not his métier and joined a Leeds advertising agency as a graphic artist. On promotion, and coming to Edinburgh in 1955 to work with McCullum Advertising, after nine years he persuaded the National Trust for Scotland that they needed an artist designer – which they certainly did.

Nicholson contributed to the artistic life of Scotland and for several years in the early 1960s he had his own country dance band which was in great demand

and made gramophone records. Music was a great passion and as his friend Allan Farquharson said at his memorial service: "Over the years he developed what he casually called his 'slide-shows'. These were the marriage of his wonderful photography with perfectly matched music, and I am sure he was utterly dreadful".

Shares soar as lenders signal house market boom

NIC CIRUTTI
and TOM STEVENSON

Share prices soared to yet another record high yesterday, buoyed by further evidence of a pick-up in the housing market and good news from the high street and a strong oil price.

By close of trade yesterday, the FT-SE 100 index closed 19.5 points higher at 3883.2, a rise of 0.5 per cent.

Traders said the increase was based on high hopes for a continuing housing market boom.

Their views were bolstered

yesterday by the regular monthly survey from the Building Societies Association, which showed that net mortgage lending in July was £1.2bn, some 7 per cent higher than the previous month.

Even more significantly, new mortgage commitments, the number of loans which societies expect to make in about two months' time, were 53,000, the highest since March 1994 and 40 per cent up on a year ago.

Ron Armstrong, deputy director general at the BSA, said: "Comparisons with 1995 are encouraging with net advances 68 per cent higher than

a year ago. Other housing market indicators are looking promising for future growth in the market. Transactions have been increasing and house prices are also rising."

Jonathan Loynes, UK economist at HSBC Greenwich, said: "The underlying trend is clearly upward. The next few months should see a strong increase in activity."

But Mr Loynes also warned of a potential slowdown in the run-up to the general election next year.

Analysts were also encouraged by figures showing that M4 – the broad measure of

money supply, including notes and coins in circulation, personal and commercial bank deposits – slowed to 8.8 per cent in the year to June, according to the Bank of England. Seasonally adjusted M4 grew 0.4 per cent in July from June, down from 0.7 per cent in June.

Lending by banks and building societies continued to increase.

The slowdown in money supply growth from annual rates of 10 per cent in May and June brought the figure back within the government's 3 to 9 per cent monitoring range for the

first time since last November.

However, the British Bankers' Association said there was a £539m increase in consumer credit in July, while lending by major banks overall rose £2.6bn in July.

Andrew Cawley, an economist at UBS, the Swiss banking group, said: "The strength of consumer credit and housing market activity within the lending figures will be seized upon by the Bank of England as a potential threat to the inflation target."

Strong money supply growth is often seen as a pointer to future inflation, and Eddie George, Governor of the Bank

of England, has warned that interest rates might have to rise if it continues unchecked.

Markets were also boosted by expectations, later confirmed by trading and financial analysis, that the US Federal Reserve would leave interest rates unchanged, and a Bundesbank cut in German rates helped the FT-SE 100 to its second record high in three days.

Further evidence of the return of the consumer feel-good factor, highlighted by unexpectedly strong results from Argos on Monday, gave the retail sector a push. Analysts said such strong growth

CITY & BUSINESS EDITOR JEREMY WARNER

Digital costs push up losses at Orange

CHRIS GODSMARK
Business Correspondent

The costs of building a digital mobile phone network pushed losses at Orange up by more than 40 per cent to £125m in the first half of the year, the company announced yesterday. But Orange, which floated on the stock market in April, also revealed better than expected figures for the growth and profitability of its customer base, news which helped to boost its flagging share price.

Orange's customer base grew by 51 per cent in the first six months of the year, from 379,000 to 573,000. This was a significant improvement on competition Celltel and Mercury One-2-One, though short of the 225,000 increase for the market leader, Vodafone. Orange's share of the digital mobile market rose slightly, from 24.5 per cent to 25.8 per cent, though Vodafone's share improved by a bigger margin, to 32.2 per cent.

Other statistics suggested Orange customers have remained loyal as the network expanded. The "churn" rate, which measures the percentage of customers who switch to other networks, fell from 18.1 per cent in the year to December 1995 to 17.6 per cent in the year to the end of June.

This compares with a rate of 25.6 per cent reported by Vodafone in the spring, though some of this represented customers who move from one retail "service provider" to another while staying with the network itself.

One surprise was the slight increase in average monthly revenues earned from each subscriber, from £36.51 per month to £36.66. Jim McCafferty, telecommunications analyst at stockbroker ABN Amro Hobar Govett, said: "Everyone was expecting revenue per month to fall as Orange expands. These figures suggest it's succeeding in its strategy to concentrate on higher-spending customers."

Orange continued to roll out its infrastructure expansion programme, adding 366 base stations in the first half of the year, and more than 1,600. It said the service now covered over 90 per cent of Great Britain. The workforce almost doubled to 3,700.

Shares in Orange have fallen heavily in recent weeks. Yesterday they rose 6p to 195p.

Satellite plans: Talks with promoter under way as broadcaster reveals record profits on £1bn revenue

Sky set for more pay-per-view boxing

MATTHEW HORSMAN
Media Editor

BSkyB, the satellite broadcaster, is considering plans to broadcast top boxing matches on a pay-per-view basis this autumn, featuring stars British fighters such as "Prince" Naseem Hamed.

Frank Warren, the leading British promoter, confirmed last night he had talked to BSkyB about putting together world-level matches featuring both British and US boxers.

"Pay-per-view is not just the future, it is a fact now," Mr Warren said. "If we don't broadcast fights on pay-per-view, all the major bouts will simply move to the US for the money."

The broadcasts would mark the first pay-per-view events in the UK since the controversial Bruno-Lyon fight, for which 650,000 Sky tickets paid either £9.95 or £12.95. BSkyB has long hinted it planned further PPV events, including sport and films.

BSkyB's chief executive, Sam Chisholm, declined to comment directly on pay-per-view

plans. "The mechanics of how you do it are in place, and we know there is a silent majority out there who believe that pay-per-view is something they want," he said.

The news emerged as BSkyB, 40 per cent owned by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, unveiled another set of record pre-tax profits, up 66 per cent year on year to £257.4m, on revenues that for the first time breached the £1bn mark.

Analysts said the results proved how lucrative Sky's near-monopoly in pay television continues to be, and suggested next year's figure could rise to as high as £350m, helped by yet another year in which the company will benefit from past tax losses to avoid mainstream corporation tax.

"This is an outstanding financial performance," Mr Chisholm said. He predicted an even brighter future for the company, following the introduction of digital television at the end of next year.

"The digital satellite product

has been the hottest consumer electronics launch in the history

of the US, and will attract similar response here," he said. "Digital is a brand new market that a lot of people will want to get into." He confirmed that BSkyB, which broadcasts 30 channels in the UK, including Sky One, is considering jointly developing six to eight new channels, to be introduced within the next year. But analysts said the channels would be a welcome addition to Sky's digital platform.

The digital plans call for as

many as 200 new channels, featuring movies, sport and as many as 60 channels dedicated to pay-per-view. Mr Chisholm declined to comment on talks now under way between BSkyB and the BBC about jointly developing six to eight new channels, to be introduced within the next year. But analysts said the channels would be a welcome addition to Sky's digital platform.

Flextech, the pay-TV pro-

grammer owned 51 per cent by giant US cable company TCI, is also negotiating for the right to co-develop the BBC offerings. The two suitors expect the BBC to make a decision within two to three months.

Mr Chisholm also confirmed that heads of agreement had been reached with Leo Kirch, the Bavarian media mogul, to cement a pay-TV joint venture in Germany. The service, in

which BSkyB is to invest as much as £200m in start-up costs, will be owned 51 per cent by Kirch and 49 per cent by Sky.

"The German deal is an absolutely brilliant one for BSkyB," said one analyst. "They get a part of a market that has 32 million TV homes and a proven appetite for pay television."

There were some concerns, however, that BSkyB may not be able to maintain its fast growth,

Photograph: Paul Bulley

as more competitors come into the market and as its reliance on cable as a means of distributing its programming grows.

Revenues from direct-to-home subscribers rose 25 per cent in the year just ended, compared to a 63 per cent jump from cable.

Chisholm also expects the same kind of jump in pay-per-view sales per subscriber, one analyst warned.

Investment Committee, page 14

Maxmin back with home shopping plan

NIGEL COPE

Reliance Insurance, Streamline has been under test in the Boston suburbs since 1993.

Mr Maxim is now hoping to franchise the concept worldwide with the UK as his first target. Speaking from his US home in Maine, he said: "This has all the characteristics of a business for the 1990s. There are certain distribution channels that are real dinosaurs. Banking and financial services is one. Supermarkets are another. People spend hours each week doing the grocery shopping. We can save them that discretionary time. Fifteen to 20 per cent of UK households would just eat this up."

Mr Maxim has identified Esher and Surbiton in Surrey and Chelmsford in Essex as possible markets: suburban areas where traffic is lighter, making delivery more efficient.

He hopes to find franchises



Jim Maxim: 'This is a business for the 1990s'

among food distribution companies but has not ruled out signing a deal with a supermarket chain. "I've looked at France, Belgium and Holland and Denmark and I can't see why the concept won't apply there."

Streamline is aimed principally at higher income, time-pressed families who are prepared to pay a premium to

avoid the Saturday trip to the supermarket. It visits new customers to establish their requirements and organise a regular shopping list.

Customers phone or fax the list through to the company once a week, though from next month orders can be placed via the Internet. The goods are delivered the following day.

Bond jailed for three years for art fraud

Failed Australian businessman Alan Bond was jailed for three years yesterday for fraud involving a French impressionist painting.

In sentencing Bond, the Australian judge said the jail term was not the maximum 14-year sentence, but it would be like a "life sentence" as it would haunt the former high-flyer forever.

Bond, lauded as Australian of the Year after winning the America's Cup yacht race in 1983, will appeal against the conviction, his lawyers later said.

Bond's personal fortune

was estimated at £350m (£180m) in the late 1980s, was found guilty last Friday on four fraud charges surrounding the sale of Edouard Manet's *La Promenade*.

The jury found that Bond, 58, had improperly used his position as director of his former corporate flagship, Bond Corporation Holdings, to allow his private company to buy *La Promenade* for about £10m less than its value in 1988.

He served only a few months in jail before a second jury acquitted him at a retrial.

He said he was only

His private company, Dallard Investments, bought the painting for £52.4m and sold it a year later at auction in New York for £17m.

Judge Antoinette Kennedy said Bond's passion for art and his inability to accept that Bond Corporation was no longer his private field led to the fraud offences.

The judge dismissed a claim by defence lawyers that a custodial sentence would kill Bond because of his failing health.

An avid art collector in his heyday, Bond faces further charges associated with the collapse of his corporate empire in the early 1990s.

He was jailed for two-and-a-half years in 1992 after being found guilty of inducing a former friend to contribute to the rescue of a Western Australia bank while concealing a £16m loss for his own company.

He served only a few months in jail before a second jury acquitted him at a retrial.

He said he was only

Consumers call for power investigation

CHRIS GODSMARK

Business Correspondent

Electricity consumers' groups yesterday called for a full-scale investigation into the operation of the power generation market.

One surprise was the slight increase in average monthly revenues earned from each subscriber, from £36.51 per month to £36.66. Jim McCafferty, telecommunications analyst at stockbroker ABN Amro Hobar Govett, said: "Everyone was expecting revenue per month to fall as Orange expands. These figures suggest it's succeeding in its strategy to concentrate on higher-spending customers."

Orange continued to roll out its infrastructure expansion programme, adding 366 base stations in the first half of the year, and more than 1,600.

Shares in Orange have fallen heavily in recent weeks. Yesterday they rose 6p to 195p.

which sets the price of power on a half-hourly basis – was still far too influenced by National Power and PowerGen. The two companies dominate the "mid-merit" segment of the pool, which generally determines the price at which all other generators can then sell their power.

Mr Prior said he was disappointed that cheaper gas generators did not have more influence over the pool price mechanism.

The Chairman's Group of Electricity Consumers' Committees, which coordinates the work of 14 regional committees, attacked the prices levied by generators and said National Power and PowerGen, the two largest generating companies, should be broken up.

Arguing that the generators were not passing on lower costs to consumers, Ken Prior, the chairman of the committees, said: "We believe there's fat in generation... there's no incentive for electricity companies to negotiate hard to get prices down."

He said power generation was "unregulated" and still controlled by National Power and PowerGen, which together account for around 40 per cent of the market. The two have reduced their share after the industry regulator, Professor Stephen Littlechild, threatened them with a referral to the Monopolies Commission.

National Power sold 4,000 megawatts of capacity to Eastern Group, the regional supplier, and PowerGen sold it a further 2,000, giving Eastern 9 per cent of the market.

But Mr Prior said Eastern's acquisition had not made much difference to the price mechanism in the generation market. "We can't see that it is adding to competition," he said.

The Electricity Pool – the wholesale electricity market

STOCK MARKETS					
FT-SE 100		Dow Jones	Nikkei		
3883.20	+19.50	+0.5	3883.20	3632.30	4.03
4385.30	+17.00	+0.4	4568.60	4015.30	3.44
1941.60	+9.30	+0.5	1945.40	1816.60	3.80
2144.72	+6.05	+0.2	2244.36	1854.06	3.10
1917.75	+8.79	+0.5	1924.17	1791.95	3.84
5710.18	+10.72	+0.2	5778.00	5032.94	2.18
2117.01	+20.60				

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COMMENT

'At the very least, there has been a highly complacent failure adequately to explain either the methodology or processes used in arriving at the valuations. As a result, Refuge and its advisers risk losing the deal'

More explanations called for in Refuge deal

When United Friendly and Refuge Group announced agreed merger terms a couple of weeks back, most of us were so blinded by the obvious logic of the deal that we did not think to question the terms. Refuge's largest shareholder, Perpetual, has since been crunching the numbers and unless it is convinced otherwise at a meeting today with the company and its advisers, is determined to vote against the transaction. Refuge is equally insistent that a renegotiation of the terms is 'out of the question' and is confident the deal will eventually go through as written.

The stock market is not so sure. Perpetual's case is a strong one and Refuge's explanations not wholly convincing. Perpetual has four basic problems with the terms. The first is that Refuge should have held out for a higher valuation of its 'orphan estate' – the life fund assets which the DTI has agreed should belong to shareholders – and that in any case, the estate has been inadequately represented in the terms of the merger. The same is true of the company's pension fund surplus. Perpetual claims a much higher proportion of the surplus should have been factored into the deal.

The third contention is that Refuge has steamed ahead with the deal without establishing or stating what the cost benefits of the transaction are or how they will be shared between policy holders and shareholders. Finally, the dividend is unfair, claims Perpetual. For United, the forecast

dividend amounts to the whole of distributable profits. For Refuge, it is only two-thirds. On the face of it, then, Refuge shareholders should be getting a majority of the combined group, not the minority they are served up with.

Refuge and its advisers, Phoenix Securities, have answers to all these points, but they are not as robust as you might expect. Moreover, they are more in the nature of excuses than convincing explanations. On the size of the orphan estate, for instance, they say that this is the maximum the DTI would allow, and that the DTI's word is final. On the other hand, Perpetual may be right to claim that a more vigorous, determined and less hasty approach might have resulted in a better deal. The United Friendly surplus was valued at only £275m when the DTI first pronounced on it some while back. Eventually it was negotiated up to £500m.

Then there is the unexplained fact that the estate was discounted by 20 per cent for the purposes of valuing Refuge. Why? Even more perplexing is Refuge's refusal to disclose what size of pension fund surplus has been factored into the valuation, or how this was established. This might reasonably be thought of as a quite insulting omission, but there's worse. It is the old fall-back position that these are complex businesses, hard for the likes of you and me to understand. Dear, oh, dear.

There is a real possibility that Refuge and its advisers have been caught napping here,

that it has taken Perpetual to point it out to them, and that they are now too embarrassed to admit it. At the very least, there has been a highly complacent failure to explain adequately either the nature of the methodology or processes used in arriving at the valuations. As a result, Refuge and its advisers risk losing the deal.

The stock market is horribly prey to fads and no more so than in the new issues arena. Two years ago falling interest rates had the City queuing up to invest in builders and property companies. Eventually the quality of the offerings deteriorated so much that even the better companies ended up slashing the asking price just to get the issue away.

The hotel sector is in the middle of that process, with Lomirho's Princess Metropole operation and now Thistle Hotels due on the stock next month, both asking shareholders for in excess of £500m. Granada is hoping to raise another £100m selling its Exclusive chain to a market that has already shelled out half as much on the flotation of Millennium & Copthorne, Jarvis, Cliveden and McDonald Hotels. It is no wonder that Intercontinental is having second thoughts about the debut it had planned for next spring.

The difference between the hotel sector's rush to the market and the fads that preceded it lies in the fundamental attractions of a business enjoying the biggest upswing in trading for years. Demographic trends and the massive growth of tourism, moreover, suggest the good news may continue for several years yet.

London is benefiting more than anywhere from the booming tourist market, a factor that will stand Thistle in good stead when it sets out its pitch to potential investors. Two thirds of its profits come from the capital where it is enjoying soaring occupancy and room rates.

Longer term, the outlook for the industry appears just as bright with increasingly rich travellers from the Far East displaying an insatiable appetite for European culture which, thanks to sterling's weakness, is having a finding relatively cheap.

At home the grey pound is being spent more and more on weekend breaks away, which pleases hoteliers who earn a much fatter margin from the leisure market than they can squeeze out of sophisticated corporate buyers.

Those factors together with an almost total lack of investment in new hotel capacity during the 1990s should keep the sector on a roll long enough for Lomirho and Thistle to secure successful floats.

British Airways' proposed tie-up with American Airlines would appear to have hit a pocket of turbulence that neither side had been expecting. It is well known that

the President of the Board of Trade Ian Lang, the Office of Fair Trading and almost every airline in Britain and the US other than the bride and groom have the deepest of reservations.

But at least it seemed that Sir George Young, the Transport Secretary, was on BA's side. Until now.

The go-ahead for the BA-American alliance is contingent upon Britain and the US agreeing a wider "open-skies" deal across the Atlantic after some five years of on-off negotiations. Without one, the other cannot happen since the prior for allowing the two dominant transatlantic carriers to jump into bed it to give everyone else, notably other US airlines, a better crack at the market.

Sir George's negotiations, however, appear to be playing hardball with their opposite numbers in the US. In advance of resumption of talks next week, they have told their American counterparts that the deal being demanded by the US – fifth freedom rights to fly into Heathrow, pick up and then continue on to anywhere in Europe – is unacceptable unless the US grants cabotage to UK airlines, that is, the right to operate domestic US services.

Now this may simply be posturing, a negotiating stance to extract the best deal for Britain. But the UK dropped cabotage from its wish list many moons ago and so it is not an issue, except to Virgin Atlantic. All very odd.

Share of new home loans falls at Halifax

NIC CIRCUIT

Halifax Building Society said yesterday that its refusal to enter the home loans market had cut its share of net mortgage lending to barely 3 per cent of the market over the first half of this year.

Excluding its acquisition of Banque Paribas' UK mortgage book, this contrasts sharply with its dominant 20 per cent share of the existing home loans market. Halifax's net mortgage lending was £585m, and the gross figure, ignoring loan redemptions, was £4.8bn – a 14.1 per cent share of the market.

Mike Blackburn, chief exec



Mike Blackburn: Will profit from affordable share

utive at Halifax, said: "We are looking for asset quality and future profitability."

"My judgement is that future profitability will not come to those who have the largest market share of the lending market, but who can afford the share they take."

Despite the unwillingness of many borrowers to switch their mortgages away from Halifax in view of its impending flotation, others were using lower mortgage interest rates to speed up their capital repayments by leaving their standing orders unchanged at higher levels.

Mr Blackburn's comments came as Halifax unveiled a rise

in first-half pre-tax profits of 6 per cent to £649m. The society said that it was still well on target for its stock market flotation in the summer of next year.

Jon Faulds, chairman at Halifax, said: "These results reflect further the steady progress at the Halifax, achieved while managing the continuing integration of Leeds Permanent, the planned acquisition of Clerical Medical and the proposed conversion."

The society said that its profit figures were achieved without writing off the mortgage incentives on offer to potential borrowers over several years, unlike some lenders.

Roger Boyes, group finance director, said that over the past six months these had reduced Halifax's profits by £64m. Since 1994, the accumulated difference in the society's profits was £295m, he added.

Retail savings balances rose by £738m compared with about £250m last year. Mr Blackburn said this was largely due to the society informing its savers that withdrawals from their accounts would not affect their free-share distribution at de-mutualisation.

Halifax has increased the number of its current account balances to more than 1.4 million, an increase of 14 per cent. Although its share of the current account market, including high street banks, is just 3 per cent, the society claimed that its "new-to-banking" share of the market was a fair higher 8 per cent.

Mr Blackburn added that the society's confidence in the current housing market meant that while it has closed 11 of its estate agency branches, it had acquired another 43 from Alliance & Leicester, mostly in the South of England.

Some 2,500 head-office staff in Halifax and Leeds have lost their jobs in the wake of the merger with Leeds Permanent last year, with more planned. But Mr Blackburn said that 1,000 jobs were being created as Halifax expands into telephone-based insurance sales.

Thatcher feared De Lorean backlash



Key players (from left): Keith Joseph; Leon Brittan; Humphrey Atkins; John Banham; Roy Mason; Patrick Jenkins; and Margaret Thatcher

Cabinet papers reveal that pulling out of the doomed car plant could have jeopardised the future of British Leyland. Michael Harrison reports

The Thatcher government pumped millions of pounds of taxpayers' money into the doomed De Lorean car plant in west Belfast because scrapping the project would have made it difficult to justify continued support for the state-owned British Leyland and the Harland & Wolff shipyard.

Ministers were also petrified that pulling the plug on the £70m venture would be seen as an act of 'betrayal' by Northern Ireland's nationalist community and serve as a recruitment drive for the Provisional IRA.

The extraordinary political machinations that lay behind the Callaghan government's decision to launch the project and the Thatcher administration's desperate attempts to keep it alive emerge from the first full examination of hitherto secret Cabinet papers and affidavits made public last week by a New York auditor.

The southern district court of New York ruled that 250 separate documents, from Cabinet minutes and confidential memoranda to depositions from witnesses including Baroness Thatcher, the former prime minister, should be made public as part of the legal action being brought by the Government against De Lorean's auditors, Arthur Andersen.

In a memorandum to the Cabinet's economic affairs committee dated 2 February, 1981 – 12 months before De Lorean's collapse – then Northern Ireland Secretary Humphrey Atkins said:

"To let this project go now would be seen, particularly by the minority community, as betrayal in the one area, economic development, where the Government could act positively. (It would not

be) a blow to the entrancing gull-winged car was given at a crucial meeting of the Callaghan Cabinet on 26 July, 1981 at which then Northern Ireland Secretary Roy Mason argued strongly in its favour. The largely Catholic Belfast had 35-40 per cent male unemployment and was in "real danger of degenerating into a ghetto". The best counter to the influence of the IRA in the area was

for McKinseys and later to be knighted after serving as the CBI's director general, took a different view. In a 13-page report submitted just eight days earlier, he warned the Cabinet that it was "an extraordinarily risky venture" and "ambitious to say the least".

In a subsequent deposition in 1990, Sir John said: "There are very few projects where hindsight

and foresight seem quite so clearly aligned" – Sir John Banham

to provide new jobs. "It was therefore of the utmost political, social and psychological importance that the project should go ahead. This would be a hammer blow to the IRA. Indirectly, it would save soldiers' lives," he said.

John Banham, then a consultant

if it could be a marvellous joy to any young person who could afford it. It was really a rather dashing car."

But she soon became suspicious: "If anyone comes to me for money again and again and again, naturally I begin to question the wisdom of the original decision and naturally I am reluctant to give taxpayers' money."

De Lorean had already soaked up £50m by the time the first demand for an extra £21m landed in July, 1980. It was discussed that month by the Cabinet's economic affairs committee, chaired by the then Industry Secretary Sir Keith Joseph.

Mr Atkins told the committee that there was "considerable risk that the project might prove commercially unsuccessful given the very changed economic circumstances of the motor industry". But he went on: "To refuse support would undoubtedly have an impact on the security situation in Northern Ireland at a time of year when emotions were at their peak running high." Within seven months De Lorean was back with the begging bowl, this time asking for the government to guarantee a £10m loan. In a letter dated 3 February, 1981, Mr Atkins said: "I am convinced that for reasons mainly special to Northern Ireland we should accede to this request."

Three days later Sir Keith penned a private memo saying that if the government refused it would be blamed. "The longer-term future of the project remains uncertain but, if it is to fail, the committed agree with the Secretary of State that this must be seen to be demonstrable responsibility of Mr De Lorean and not the fault of the government."

In a handwritten note at the top of the memo Mrs Thatcher added: "I take it this is the last [double underlined] help we give to this unwise project."

It was not. In December, 1981, the loan guarantee was about to run out and De Lorean was back in hand again, this time asking for a six-month extension and a further £5m top up to the facility. But by this time the Cabinet players had changed. Jim Prior had taken over from Mr Atkins as Northern Ireland Secretary. Sir Keith had handed over as Industry Secretary to Patrick Jenkins, and Leon Brittan had become Chief Secretary to the Treasury.

Mr Prior told his colleagues that "in commercial terms it would make little sense to end the project at this stage". It was to be a short-lived reprieve. Within a month De Lorean's financial position had deteriorated to an alarming degree. On 21 January, 1982, Mr Prior told Cabinet that without a further injection of £47m De Lorean would have to cease trading in eight days. A month later De Lorean was put into receivership.

The cruellest irony was that after the symbolism invested in De Lorean it self-destructed without handing the IRA a propaganda victory. As Mr Prior told Cabinet on 28 January 1982, "So far there have been no adverse political consequences in Northern Ireland."



John De Lorean: His gull-winged car project was 'an extraordinarily risky venture'

Active Imaging's shares plummet below placing

MAGNUS GRIMOND

Active Imaging, a high tech group floated on the Alternative Investment Market in April, saw its shares dive below the placing price yesterday after it was warned that results would be "significantly" short of market expectations and announced the resignation of its managing director.

The price slumped 18p to 110p, which compares with the 112p flotation on news that the loss of two key distribution contracts in the US would hit revenues "significantly" in the group's original Data Cell's reseller business. David Slorach, responsible for the Data Cell operations, has resigned, apparently in response to the problems there.

Raymond Fagan, Active Imaging finance director, said:

"Inevitably when these sorts of things happen it takes its toll in personal pressures." He added that Mr Slorach's pay-off would not exceed one year's salary, currently £50,000.

Ingrid von Hentschel, an analyst with Besson Gregory, the group's brokers, said first half results, due to be announced next month, would be "absolutely dreadful". She has downgraded her forecast for the current year from a loss of £900,000 to one of £1.9m.

The cancellation announced yesterday of the exclusive contract with Imaging Technology Inc follows on from the earlier termination of a deal to sell its Optima product. Active Imaging has replaced the business, estimated to represent £1m of expected revenues in July this year, with new distribution contracts with two

other US imaging companies, Media Cybernetics and Cognex.

Although Active Imaging expects "significant" progress being achieved in the remainder of the year, Ms von Hentschel expects Data Cell to have undertaken further work on its software products to make them fully compatible with those of Media Cybernetics, which will hit this year's figures.

However, she has upgraded her forecast for next year to a profit of £500,000, compared with a break-even expectation before, as a result of improved expectations for the British group's Internet imaging product.

It was excitement over the prospects for Active Imaging's intelligent digital cameras which allowed it to raise £5m in the April placing and send its shares soaring to 160p soon afterwards.

EU minister in talks to defuse VW state aid row

Günter Rexrodt, the German Economics Minister, and Karel van Miert, the European Competition Minister, have agreed to meet earlier than planned in a bid to defuse a simmering row over state aid payments to Volkswagen, the German car manufacturer.

The dispute centres on a DMR1 (£40m) aid payment made to Volkswagen by Kurt Biedenkopf, the Saxon Prime Minister, who claimed the state stood to lose 23,000 automotive jobs in Mosel and Chemnitz if it did not pay.

The minister and the EU official spoke on the phone yesterday and agreed to an earlier meeting on Friday instead of next Tuesday.

Their conversation was an effort to create a constructive foundation for a solution and "calm things down a bit", the EU said.

The European Commission says it considers the aid to be illegal and that the onus is on German authorities to resolve the dispute over funding. The subsidies are illegal. They must end. The ball is in the German court," a Commission spokesman said.

The spokesman added: "The Commission has every right to take an interest in public subsidies paid to the German manufacturer. Failure to respect [the Commission's] decision would have significant repercussions on the functioning of the single European market."

The Commission maintains that allowing the Saxon subsidy would cause a string of demands for similar subsidies in east Germany. It says that, until the amount is repaid, it will block other requests by VW for subsidies. It also said that rivals in

public procurement bids might take legal action to exclude VW from public tenders.

The German government accepts Saxon's arguments that the payments are justified, but believes the state went too far by defying the order from Brussels, an Economics Ministry spokesman said. The government has become worried that the dispute will spur anti-EU sentiment in the country.

Mr van Miert said: "You cannot simply break the law and hope the European Commission will close its eyes. This would be the end of the internal market in Europe."

Yesterday's telephone conversation with Mr van Miert was Mr Rexrodt's first official act after a 10-week bout of malaria. Neither side would comment on its hopes for a satisfactory outcome.

The Bundesbank announced M3 figures in line with expectations, showing that growth slowed to an annualised rate of 8.6 per cent in July, down from 9.6 per cent in June. It attributed the slowdown in growth to the dampening effect of public sector cash transactions.

business

Can anything now stop BSkyB?

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY TOM STEVENSON

From being one of the City's most maligned stocks at flotation 18 months ago, BSkyB has rarely looked back since, soaring to an all-time high this week in expectation of record profits for the year to June. Sam Chisholm, chief executive, duly obliged yesterday, unveiling £257m in pre-tax profits, a dividend of 5.5p, and revenues above £1bn for the first time.

The shares, trading at a whopping 535p, up from just 340p at flotation, have seemed to defy gravity, especially since BSkyB clinched a deal to jointly develop pay-TV in Germany with Bavarian mogul Leo Kirch earlier this year. It helped, too, that the Office of Fair Trading gave the company a clean bill of health following an investigation into allegations of monopolistic behaviour.

Can anything now stop BSkyB? The company has the best programming from Hollywood and the world of sport, the best management subscription system in the country, and the only viable encryption technology for the scrambling and unscrambling of TV signals.

Importantly, it has proved it can increase subscription prices every year, on the back of new programming. This year, viewers get the Warner Channel, the Weather Channel, and seven new services from the Grunada-BSkyB joint venture. The cash flow allows programme purchase budgets to rise yet further, enticing new subscribers and sending revenues higher. Sam Chisholm calls it the "virtuous circle".

There are a few worries on the horizon, all the same. Up until now, BSkyB has generated the bulk of its revenues from its charges to direct-to-home (DTT) viewers (those equipped with satellite dishes). But more than half of new subscribers are now getting their Sky Television channels via cable, which generates lower revenues per household than DTT.

BskyB faces some big bills in the next few years. The first will be as much as £200m to develop DTT, its German pay-TV venture. Then it will have to meet the costs of introducing digital satellite in the UK, which no one has been able to reliably quantify.

There is no problem with the big investment demands: Sky has virtually no debt and generates pre-tax profits of nearly £9 a second. But the amazing profit margins of late don't look sustainable.

Of course, BSkyB has been underestimated before. It could be that the company manages to migrate its existing near-monopoly from analogue to digital, maintaining its profit margins.

There must be a risk, however, that the expected profits of £320m in 1996/7, or 17.1p a share, will be the end of the red-hot growth period for

BSkyB, as it settles into being a big, profitable but more mature broadcaster. That would make the forward multiple of a whopping 31 times earnings look demanding.

Orange is still a leap of faith

Markets can be cruel to recently floated growth stocks if they are priced too aggressively and Orange has been no exception. Investors who paid 205p in April's flotation have had a nail-biting time over the past few weeks, watching the share price climb to a peak of 254p, only to dive to a low of 173p. The future apparently wasn't as "bright" for shareholders as the company's undeniably slick publicity had suggested.

Yesterday things began to perk up again, even though Orange reported a 40 per cent increase in its half-year losses to £125.2m. The share price

climbed 6p to 193p.

The problem investors have been experiencing is that not even Orange's im-

pressive technological wizardry has allowed anyone to travel into the future to see how much of the company's undeniable promise can be translated into hard profits.

Optimists can point to a mass of statistics which show Orange's impressive customer loyalty. "Churn" rate – the pace at which customers switch to other networks – fell from 18.1 per cent in the first half of 1995 to 17.6 per cent in the first six months of this year. That compares with Vodafone's last published figure of 25.6 per cent at the end of March and 30 per cent for Cellnet.

More impressive is the fact that Orange's average monthly revenue earned from each customer rose from £36.51 to £36.86. It may not seem much, but analysts had expected revenue per head to fall as lower-spending customers joined the network. So not only are Orange's customer loyal, they are also – probably – better customers than those of some other networks in terms of spending power.

That's the good news. According to more pessimistic analysts, however, there is an equally worrying downside. The City consensus is that Orange will

lose £250m this year, up from £140.5m last year as it continues to spend heavily on building its network. By anyone's standards these are big numbers. Vodafone, on the other hand, will make around £500m just from its UK operations, with Cellnet expected to make £230m. Investors are unlikely to see any profits worth mentioning until 1998-99, and dividends may come later still. Orange remains a leap of faith.

Takare suffers in care confusion

The past year has been bloody for private nursing home groups, but few have suffered as badly as Takare, biggest in the sector. Standing at 225p last September, the shares have since crashed to 136p, up 5p yesterday. The well-publicised squeeze on local authority funding has hit the group particularly hard, heavily dependent as it is on social service department budgets.

After more than three years of operation, the problems associated with the Community Care Act, which devoted financing of the elderly to local authorities, show little sign of resolution. The system appears to be in paralysis in parts of the country like Liverpool, choking up hospitals with old people who should be in homes. Takare's occupancy levels have been hit accordingly, falling 4 points to 92.4 per cent in established homes during the six months to June. With a big opening programme, Takare is highly geared to occupancy and this relatively modest drop has had a disproportionate effect on the interim figures. Pre-tax profits slumped 13 per cent to £8.66m in the half year.

The occupancy problems, which have been concentrated in some of the start-up homes, have now prompted a radical change in strategy. Takare is dumping its new build approach in favour of acquisitions. Management reckons it could live up to 80 per cent gearing if the right deals come along, giving it firepower of around £100m, although it is ruling out hostile bids like Westminster Healthcare's tilt at Goldsborough.

At the same time, Takare plans to sweat existing assets by courting more private payers and high dependency residents, while offering more services from homes, such as meals on wheels, and district nursing.

The strategy makes sense, but with political uncertainties continuing, the external climate remains cloudy. Profits of around £18m this year would give a forward multiple of 12. Hold.

Sharp-tongued Chisholm aims a blow at Panmure

CITY DIARY

JOHN WILLCOCK

Sam Chisholm, chief executive of BSkyB, put a good-natured boot into Anthony de Larrinaga of Panmure Gordon at the analyst's meeting yesterday.

Mr de Larrinaga has been advising clients to sell BSkyB for months, even as the share price has charged ahead to 535p. He thinks the shares in Rupert Murdoch's money machine are worth, at most, 450p.

As the meeting proceeded, Mr Chisholm swatted the doffing de Larrinaga: "You go ahead and continue to make my clients poorer."

John Greenhalgh and his colleagues at PR outfit City of London will be celebrating with a bottle or three of Pinot Noir 1982 from the Coldstream Vineyard in Victoria, Australia today.

The firm is due to receive a cheque for £100,000, thanks to an investment in the Coldstream vineyard two years ago which has come spectacularly right.

But it did not go quite as planned, admits Mr Greenhalgh. "We invested £160,000 two years ago in order to use Coldstream to build a financial services arm in Australia. The asset value of the shares covered the price. But now Southcorp (a big Australian wine maker) has bought Coldstream, and the investment has been a winner."

Other shareholders in

Coldstream include members of the Coldstream Guards, Mr Greenhalgh adds. City of London, which gained promotion from the USM to a full listing this month, has another £5m invested in various situations, including a chunk of Signet it bought three years ago. At this rate, Mr Greenhalgh will be trading spin doctoring for investment trust status.

Get fit with the Lord Mayor of London, Sir John Chalstrey is calling on everyone in

the City to support the Corporation's "Good health to the City and the Nation" day on Saturday 7 September.

Sadly, this does not mean that the Lord Mayor will be shedding his ermine and stepping into Mr Motivator-style tights. However, a spokeswoman says: "He's a keen swimmer. He's a very keen walker, and he's gone to Scotland for his holidays."

The battle of the Barings books is hotting up. The allegedly definitive version of the merchant bank's collapse by John Gapper and Nick Denton, due out on 25 September, is being pre-empted by two paperbacks.

In what Mr Gapper, the *Financial Times'* urban banking editor, suspects is "a spoiler", Stephen Fay's hardback *The Collapse of Barings*, published last February, is

being put out again as a paperback in a fortnight's time.

Not to be outdone, Nick

Leeson's own tome, *Rogue Trader*, ghost-written by Edward Whitley and also published last February, is due to appear as a paperback.

Mr Gapper is unflustered about the fate of his *All that Glitters: The Fall of Barings*.

"Wait till the 23rd. You'll get the real thing," he purrs.

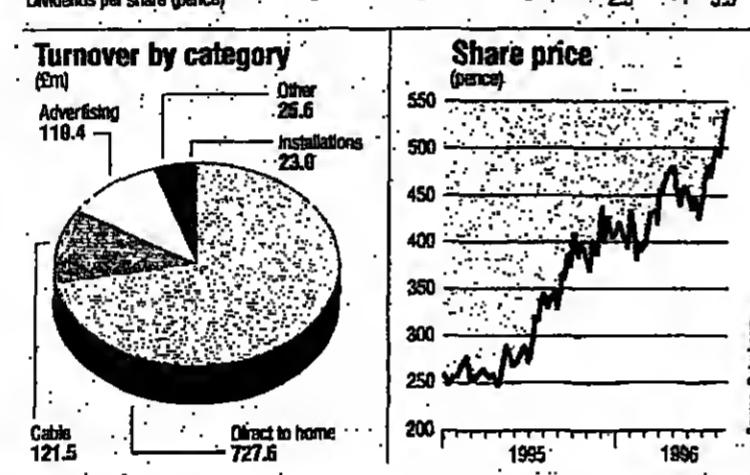
Chris Ring, formerly head of private client stockbrokers Wis Speke, has had a nervous start as head of NatWest Stockbrokers, the bank's retail arm. The business side is fine, but he had a hard time dealing with a hot air balloon ascent which the bank staged as part of a "meet the press" stunt.

"I don't particularly like heights," he admits. "You take your life in your hands when you join NatWest."

B Sky B: AT A GLANCE

Market value: £9.2bn, share price 534p

Five Year record	1992*	1993*	1994*	1995	1996
*Pre profits prior to flotation					
Revenue (£m)	192	257	370	450	534
Pre-tax profits (loss) (£m)	(167.9)	(75.6)	92.9	155.3	257.4
EPS (pence)	13.7	6.6	14.5	22.9	53.4
Dividends per share (pence)	2.5	5.5	10.0	17.0	34.0



Refuge attempts to avert revolt on United merger

NIC CICUTTI

Senior executives at Refuge Assurance, the insurer, will today meet with Perpetual, the fund manager and one of its largest single shareholders, in an attempt to avert a threatened vote against the planned £1.4bn merger with United Friendly.

The meeting will be held to discuss Perpetual's claim that Refuge shareholders are getting a raw deal from the merger, which undervalues the

company by up to £500m. But Neil Woodford, fund manager said yesterday that if the talks did not resolve the significant worries he had over the exact terms of the merger, he would vote against it at a special shareholders' meeting on 9 September.

"I will make my own mind up in the light of what is said and the discussions we hold with Refuge. My position now is that this merger is a bad deal for shareholders and should not be

supported," Mr Woodford said.

"I do not know how other shareholders might react. The position is that since I made my opposition known, a significant number of small shareholders have been in touch to say they agree with my arguments. Some other fund managers with larger holdings also have reservations. The meeting itself requires a simple majority for it to succeed."

Mr Woodford's comments

follow a wrangle between Perpetual and Refuge over the exact proportion of so-called "orphan assets", which are attributable to shareholders before the merger with United Friendly takes place.

Perpetual, which holds 7 per cent of Refuge's shares, believes that the greater a part of the surpluses which had accumulated in the insurers' funds since its formation in the mid-19th century, belong to shareholders.

The fund managers' argument is based on arguments over the exact value of Refuge's pension fund and how much of its surplus shareholders are entitled to.

Also on differing views of the proportion of funds in the ordinary and industrial branches of refuge's business which are assets distributable between policyholders and shareholders.

Perpetual's view is that all funds accumulated by 1928, since when a 90/10 split

in favour of policyholders has been in force, should go to shareholders.

The company also argues that part of the funds accumulated in a separate ordinary branch, which represents policies where premiums are still collected door to door, should also go to shareholders.

Although this was blocked by the Department of Trade and Industry, Perpetual argues that Refuge should have argued harder for it to happen.

IN BRIEF

• Perry Group, the motor dealer, has raced ahead with pre-tax profits up 37 per cent to £4.1m in the six months to June. Chairman Richard Allan said retail sales of new and used cars in August were well ahead of 1995 levels. He added that total sales of the new "P-registration" cars would be ahead of the 469,000 recorded last year. However, he forecast that the final figure would be less than the industry estimates of 500,000.

• Graseby, the monitoring equipment group, said it was firing on all four cylinders for the first time in five years as it reported a bounce back from last year's depressed second half. Pre-tax profits slipped from £5.37m to £4.99m in the six months to June, but that represented a substantial improvement on the £6.40m reported in the immediately preceding six months.

The defence division more than doubled profits to £1.48m and the group said it was the first time in five years it was seeing growth in the business. Profits fell in the product monitoring and medical teams, but the latter will be almost doubled by the recent acquisition of 3M's drug monitoring equipment operation. The interim dividend is being held at 2.7p.

• Glenchwinton, the homewares and pubs group, saw profits rise sharply to £538,000 (£104,000) at the interim stage. The figures were boosted by last October's acquisition of Country Style Inns. There are now 17 pubs in the chain with more openings planned for this year. Like-for-like sales in the pubs rose by 8 per cent during the period. The dividend was increased by 50 per cent to 4.5p.

• Syndicate Capital Trust, a corporate capital provider at Lloyds, is expecting a "sound initial result" from its first year of underwriting activities in the insurance market. Richard Fielding, recently appointed chairman, said he was confident the shortly to be reported figures for the 1994 underwriting year would "stand us in good stead in the more difficult years ahead."

The group, which recently raised £23m from shareholders in anticipation of the success of the Lloyds' rescue plan, saw revenues slip from £1.57m to £1.39m in the year to June. A final dividend of 1.75p maintains the annual total at 2.75p.

• Kerry Group, the Irish foods company, lifted half-year profits by 21 per cent to £6.20m. The figures were boosted by strong organic growth in both consumer foods and ingredients.

• Ericsson, the Swedish telecommunications group, increased profits by 31 per cent to Swedish kroner 4.2bn in the six months to June. Order bookings increased 20 per cent to SKr6.3bn due to strong performances from radio and public telecommunications.

Ericsson said cashflow was still negative due to continued expansion and increased demands for customer financing. Some operations may be sold as a result.

• Armitage Brothers, the pet food manufacturer, grew profits from £1.1m to £1.4m in the year to June despite no real evidence of a consumer upturn, the company said.

Sales grew to £76m helped by a late contribution from the recently acquired Phoenix fish foods business and the recovery of 7.2p.



Good times: The Thistle board of directors has been encouraged by the tourist boom to float. Photograph: Jane Baker

TOM STEVENSON

The hotel sector's rush to the stockmarket was joined by another heavyweight group yesterday as Thistle Hotels, London's biggest hotelier, confirmed its plan to float next month in an international placing and intermediaries offer.

The offer, which is expected to value the former Mount Charlotte Group at between £1bn and £1.5bn,

SHORTS

DATA BANK	
FT-SE 100	3883.2+19.5
FT-SE 250	4385.3+17.0
FT-SE 350	1941.6+9.3
SEAO VOLUME	629m shares, 32,435 bargains
Gifts Index	93.33 -0.08



Enterprise leads the way as oil groups spurt upwards

Oils enjoyed an investment gusher as the stock market resumed its upwards and onwards march.

Spurred by the strength of the crude price, leading oil groups made headway although British Petroleum, which has hit new highs with almost monotonous regularity, was for once left in the cold.

It was the turn of Enterprise Oil to make the running. The shares jumped 14.5p to a 510.5p peak as Robert Fleming Securities was thought to underline its belief the shares will go to 600p.

Since its humiliating defeat at the hands of the Lasmo oil group, Enterprise, after a difficult period of contrition, has recaptured its exuberance and adopted a higher City profile.

Elf Aquitaine, the French group which had 26 per cent sold its remaining interest earlier this year. But there

ers with a number of institutions anxious to increase their involvement. The group has a portfolio of exciting overseas ventures; Italy is looking particularly promising.

With its shares at their highest for four years – they hit 686p in 1990 – it may not be long before Enterprise is tempted back into the takeover arena – although Lasmo is unlikely to be targeted again.

James Capel was responsible for BP's weakness, suggesting a switch into Shell. It was enough to lower BP 2p to 625p and lift Shell 12p to 961p.

Smaller oil groups joined the fun with Barclays De Zoete Wedd weighing in with some cheerful comments. Cairn Energy added 8p to 322p; Hardy Oil & Gas (regarded as the most likely takeover candidate) 4p to 274p and Tallow Oil 2p to 97.5p.

The FT-SE 100 index stretched to another peak – up

19.5 points to 3,883.2. The possibility of lower interest rates continues to enthrall the stock market. Growing evidence the "feel-good factor" is seeping through and possibly developing into an economic boom is another thought which is stirring the market and encouraging talk of a heady run.

The supporting FT-SE 250 index still a fair cry from its peak, is nevertheless, feeling the buying impact. It rose 17 points to 4,385.3 – its fifteenth consecutive gain.

However, with many big hitters still on holiday trading levels remain uninspiring. And the market looks fragile. It would not take much bearish

news for it to turn on a sixpence and send the bulls scampering for the exit.

Railtrack, enjoying its first bull run, steamed ahead another 5.5p to 255.5p. Its 6.8 per cent dividend yield is drawing in institutions but there is also talk of property deals being inked in the next few weeks. In addition there is a nagging suspicion that after the takeover of Porterbrook, the rail leasing company, Railtrack may not be immune from corporate attention.

Retailers drew more inspiration from the Argos figures with Kingsfisher up 14p to 668p. Great Universal Stores had the added support of hopes of a

share buy back or special dividend, gaining 25p to 663p.

Bass frothed up in late trading – 13p to 836p – to talk the protracted deal over Carlsberg-Tetley had finally been concluded. Allied Domecq, owner of half of CT, gained 3p to 450p.

Grand Metropolitan, jumping 15p to 477p, highest for two years. It is due to make an investment presentation on its food division today.

EMI managed a further 14p advance to 1,474p; Thorn gave further ground, off 2p to 389p.

Brewdog, the food group, was ruffled by a 7.4 million delayed trade, easing 1p to 98p.

Associated British Foods shaded to 402p as Henderson Crosthwaite expressed caution about pricing pressures.

British Gas fired to 198p ahead of today's Ofgas price announcement on its TransCo unit's pricing policy.

Active Imaging produced

the day's profit warning, falling 15p to 110p.

Pegaso, the computer group, slipped 2p to 393p. Bigger rival Sage has a hostile 425p-a-share bid on the table.

Refuge added 9p to 403p as Perpetual, which believes the deal undervalues Refuge, is due to meet the two insurance groups today.

Astec (BSR), the electrical equipment maker, gained 2.5p to 135p on talk of a Swedish bid. Costain, the hard pressed builder, fell 5p to 66p on reports it could lose its quota because of the dominating position of three major shareholders.

Hawthorn, the sports equipment group, rose 1p to 48p. Stockbroker Wise Speke expects profits to improve £60,000 to £5.1m this year with 5.5m likely next. It rates the shares a buy.

TAKING STOCK

■ Emerald Energy, unchanged at 2p, is thought to be near to acquiring Colombian oil interests which could transform the company. It has recruited Dr Keith Hewitt, formerly Texaco's man in the South American country, as a director. And Dr Hewitt, who has enjoyed remarkable exploration success in Colombia, has picked up 7.5 per cent of Emerald, becoming the oil firm's biggest shareholder. The Colombian adventure could dwarf Emerald's existing US operations. It finance its expansion Emerald is on a cash raising exercise which will include a shareholders' claw back.

■ Chieftain, the insulation group, held at 41p, a 12 month high. It is thought to be trading well. Takeover speculation is also in the air, with a 70p bid said to be in the offing.

market report/shares

MARKET REPORT

DEREK PAIN

Stock market reporter of the year



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news

Great walking. Beautiful scenery. A rambler's paradise...if someone doesn't stop you finishing the journey



Ramblers in England and Wales have a one in three chance of completing a two-mile walk on rights of way

STEPHEN GOODWIN

Barbed wire, undergrowth, locked gates and crops look like turning the Government's target of an unobstructed country footpath network by 2000 into something of an embarrassment.

In 1987, the declaration that all 140,000 miles of public paths in England and Wales would be open to walkers had a popular ring. After all, some 250 million walking trips of more than two miles are made in the countryside each year. But the target, set by the Countryside Commission, is beginning to look an awkward hostage to fortune. Recent surveys indicate that 25 per cent of the network is still difficult to follow without encountering obstacles.

And despite entreaties from their own organisations – the National Farmers' Union and the Country Landowners' Association – to obey the law, a truculent or indifferent hardcore of farmers and landowners seem unlikely to change their ways unless county councils make robust use of their

powers under the 1990 Rights of Way Act.

The gap between the commission's target and reality was highlighted yesterday by the Ramblers' Association. At six locations in Britain, footpath activists drew attention to blatant examples of obstruction in the opening shot of a "Free Your Paths" campaign.

Not all the blockages could be blamed on farmers. In Epping Forest district, the association drew attention to a brick wall and wrought iron gate built by a householder about a right of way.

John Holness, the RA's West Essex footpath secretary, said ramblers had been told as long ago as 1991 that the council was taking legal action to get the wall removed. Epping Forest district council acts as an agent for Essex County Council, but, Mr Holness, said: "if the district council was a private company, it would have been sacked years ago for failing to do its job."

Epping is not unusual. In Somerset, RA chairman Kate Ashbrook led a group on a compass bearing through a field of



No go area: Ramblers stroll through Lambourn Valley Way, in Berkshire, which will be off-limits when the planned Newbury bypass crosses the path. Photograph: Glynn Griffiths

Land of beauty and barbed wire

six-foot high maize where the farmer readily acknowledged a footpath should be visible. "Footpath obstruction must be the biggest crime in the countryside," Ms Ashbrook said.

The maize field is in Wedmore, near Cheddar, where local ramblers reckon about half the parish's 100 paths are obstructed. Somerset county council does not expect to have many of them in good order by the millennium.

The commission set its target after conducting a survey which found that walkers in England and Wales had on average only a one in three chance of being able to complete a two-mile country walk on rights of way. The picture today is better, if patchy. It depends on whether highways authorities have the will and readiness to use scarce resources on implementing the

Act, which gave councils power to prosecute or remove obstructions themselves and send the bill to the landowner.

Somerset has a record of not prosecuting while Buckinghamshire, for example, does. As a result, Buckinghamshire looks like meeting the deadline on clearing its paths.

The findings of a re-survey by the commission are due to be published in October. Thanks to a doubling of grant to councils for footpath work, to £25m, and the 1990 Act, these will show that at least three-quarters of the 140,000 miles are open for use. But the RA, some of whose 116,000 members did much of the leg-work for the survey, are concerned that with only three years to go to the millennium, 40,000 miles of network remain impossible or difficult to use.

The picture today is better, if patchy. It depends on whether highways authorities have the will and readiness to use scarce resources on implementing the

Snarling dogs and shotguns apart, nothing is more off-putting to country walkers than barbed wire, writes Stephen Goodwin. And in few areas are the entanglements more numerous than in the neighbouring parishes of Whitford and Yscodrig in Flintshire.

Walking is the most popular recreation in Wales yet it can often seem an unwelcoming place for the rambler. More than

half of the paths in its 25,000-mile network are reckoned impossible or difficult to use – a worse record than in England.

A deep-rooted dislike of outsiders in the quieter communities is tactfully hinted at by Welsh footpath campaigners who try to explain the difference.

Whitford and Yscodrig could not be described as remote. They are close to the busy North Wales coast and part of

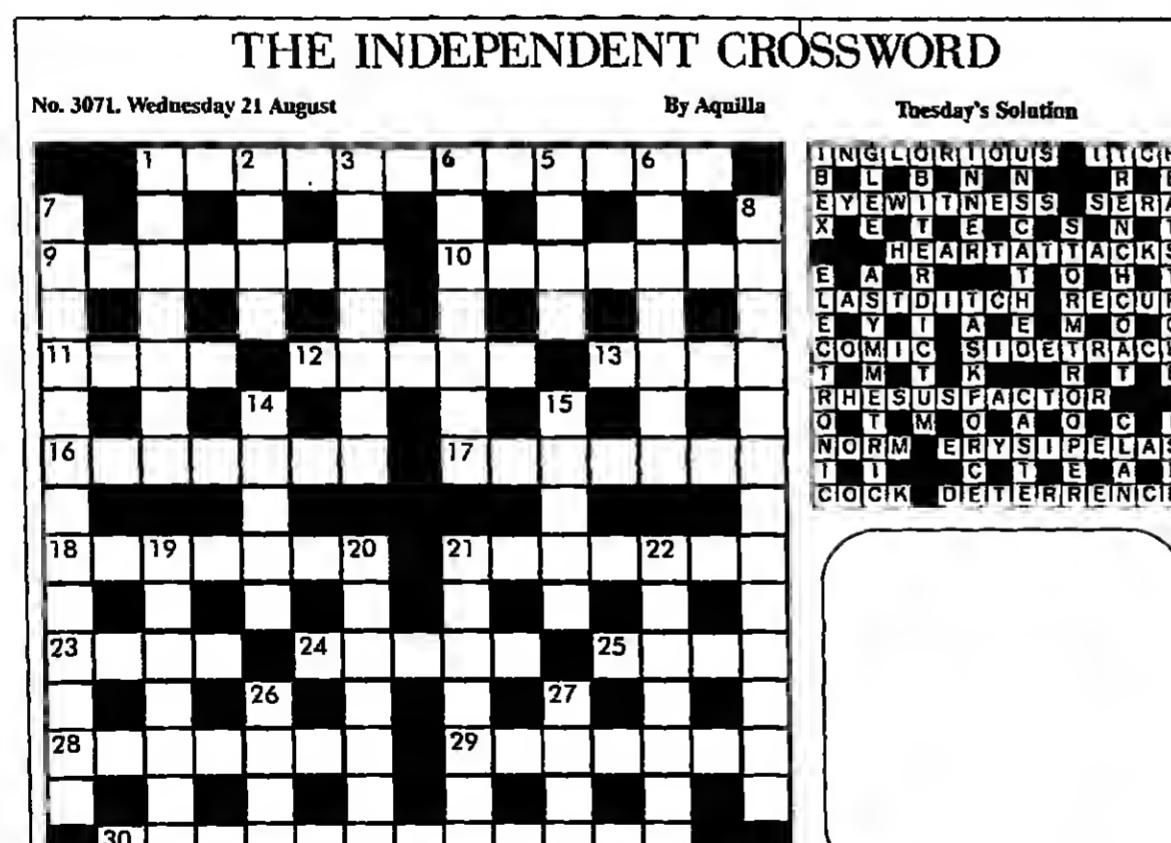
the attraction of the green hillsides is the splendid view over the Dee estuary, but it is hazardous terrain for the walker.

The Ramblers' Association's latest survey of the area lists 185 obstructions in the two parishes – 69 in Whitford and 116 in Yscodrig. Barbed wire is the

most common. "Stile wired", "electric fence", "affluent flooding", and "locked gate" are others. Well over three-quarters of

the paths in the area are blocked. The ramblers drew attention to the dismal record in 1992, and little has changed since, although the local squire, Lord Mostyn, did put footpaths on his own land in order.

John Robinson, the RA's North Wales secretary, is not optimistic that Flintshire County Council will take action against farmers who refuse to cut away the wire.



ACROSS

1 Man's overcoat reflected his fashion (12)
9 Great bat criticised, you'll hear (7)
10 Clementine's father taking Virginia to be a goddess (7)
11 Writer's tip considered? (4)
12 Feeble fellow to complain bitterly (5)
13 Following first at Goodwood, stable-boy is delighted (4)
16 Once, a five-year period of great drive and spirit (7)
17 Damper needed by trumpeter indoors, possibly? (7)
18 Irregular to show leading-lady, say, in unpleasant setting (7)
21 Rabbit on the cart that is upset (7)
23 Redundant potter? (4)

24 Pen of a poet (5)
25 Gin – not quite enough for a revolutionary social gathering (4)
28 Swiss resort packed, we hear (7)
29 Place in which to learn music, originally, in various keys? (7)
30 The case for arms limitation (12)

DOWN

1 Half of the fare from Dublin, going by air? (7)
2 Total energy used up by Australian natives, running (4)
3 Difficult to prove, the more complex it is (7)
4 Guides admitting Mum? Crumbs! (7)

5 Small hotels popular with partners at table (4)
6 German siren and the traditional knowledge that is left over (7)
7 This harness pinch a bit? (7-6)
8 Ticker-tape exponent making airdrop charge? (13)
14 Hearing difficulty (5)
15 Turkey on a plate to consume in banquet (5)
19 Badly lost around here in France? Ask! (7)
20 Abandon job and restart at Twickenham, perhaps (4,3)
21 Musical work of tin soldiers at the double (7)
22 Great suffering of fellows in the wrong? (7)
26 Piece of the sporran that is not matched (4)
27 Means of raising flag (4)

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